

INTERNATIONALISATION ANNUAL REPORT



*Inspiring excellence, transforming lives
through quality, impact, and care.*

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



UFS
INTERNATIONAL
AFFAIRS

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EDITORIAL

Internationalisation as Purpose, Practice, and Possibility

PROF LYNETTE JACOBS
ACTING DIRECTOR: UFS OFFICE FOR
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



Internationalisation at the University of the Free State (UFS) is not a peripheral activity, nor a collection of disconnected initiatives; it is a comprehensive, purposeful, and values-driven process. ”

Internationalisation at the University of the Free State (UFS) is not a peripheral activity, nor a collection of disconnected initiatives. It is a comprehensive, purposeful, and values-driven process that enables our institutional aspiration to be a research-led, student-centred, and regionally engaged university that contributes meaningfully to social justice and sustainable development. This 2024 Internationalisation Report reflects a year in which that purpose was pursued with increasing intentionality, care, and collective ownership.

The year under review unfolded within a complex global and national context. Universities worldwide continue to navigate geopolitical uncertainty, persistent inequalities, digital transformation, and evolving expectations of higher education's role in society. Within South Africa, these pressures intersect with urgent imperatives of transformation, access, relevance, and sustainability. Against this backdrop, 2024 can be characterised as a year of consolidation and alignment for internationalisation at the UFS – a period in which the emphasis has shifted from expansion to coherence, quality, and impact.

At the heart of internationalisation at the UFS are our people. This report bears testimony to the commitment and creativity of academic and professional staff who initiate and sustain international research collaborations, internationalise curricula, supervise postgraduate students across borders, and embed global perspectives in teaching and scholarship. It also reflects the dedication of professional staff within the Office for International Affairs (OIA), as well as across faculties, centres, and support divisions, whose work enables internationalisation to function with integrity, responsiveness, and care. Equally important are our students, who are not passive beneficiaries of internationalisation, but active participants and co-creators as researchers, exchange students, virtual collaborators, cultural ambassadors, and emerging global citizens.

Internationalisation at the UFS is deliberately conceived as comprehensive in nature. As this report illustrates, it spans research, learning and teaching, partnerships, student experience, institutional systems, and societal engagement. Research internationalisation remains a flagship strength, with international collaboration continuing to enhance the visibility, impact, and relevance of knowledge produced at the UFS. Our centres of excellence, research units, and academic networks demonstrate how globally connected scholarship can be firmly rooted in African contexts and priorities, contributing simultaneously to global knowledge production and local transformation.

At the same time, internationalisation at the UFS is not confined to mobility or elite participation. Internationalisation at home, including Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), curriculum internationalisation, cultural engagement, and digitally mediated collaboration, has become increasingly central to our equity agenda. These approaches ensure that international and intercultural learning is accessible to all students, regardless of their ability to travel, and that global engagement is embedded within everyday academic and co-curricular experiences. In this way, internationalisation directly contributes to the development of graduate attributes, intercultural competence, and global citizenship, while remaining locally relevant and socially responsive.

A defining feature of the UFS approach is its Africa-imbued orientation. Internationalisation, Africanisation, and decolonisation are understood as complementary and mutually reinforcing processes. The initiatives documented in this report reflect an intentional commitment to strengthening partnerships across the African continent and the Global South, while maintaining principled and reciprocal engagements with partners in the Global North. This is not a positioning of opposition, but one of contribution – an assertion that knowledge

produced from African contexts, informed by diverse epistemologies and lived realities, has global value and significance.

The role of the Office for International Affairs within this landscape is fundamentally enabling. Internationalisation at the UFS is not owned by a single office or portfolio; it is a shared institutional responsibility. The OIA works in partnership with faculties, campuses, centres, and support units to facilitate collaboration, provide strategic and operational support, and strengthen governance and reporting. This distributed model reflects a maturing internationalisation ecosystem in which leadership is exercised at multiple levels and closest to the academic core.

This report is therefore more than just a record of activities. It is a narrative of practice, partnership, and possibility. It offers evidence of impact while inviting reflection on where we have been intentional, where alignment can be strengthened, and how internationalisation can continue to serve our academic mission, our students, and the societies in which we are embedded.

Looking ahead, the UFS Internationalisation Strategy 2023–2028 provides a clear framework for the next phase of this journey. It calls for deepened coherence, enhanced societal impact, responsible use of digitalisation, and a continued commitment to an Africa-centred, yet globally connected approach to international engagement. As we move forward, internationalisation will increasingly require collective stewardship by academics, professional staff, students, and partners alike.

It is in this spirit that the report is offered: as a mirror reflecting a year of thoughtful practice, and as a springboard for continued collaboration. Internationalisation at the UFS is ultimately everybody's business, and together we have the opportunity to shape it with purpose, integrity, and confidence. 🌍



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University of the Free State (UFS) efforts to strengthen and advance internationalisation efforts across its three campuses.

INSTITUTIONAL NARRATION



1. Peace, Justice, and Human Rights

Dr Namakula anchors Africa's reparations agenda at UN

Dr Catherine Namakula, a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Law, served as a member of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent in 2024. Her aim is to establish the UFS Africa Reparations Hub as an academic leader in the reparations movement.



Prof Tameshnie Deane Appointed in the Faculty of Law

Prof Tameshnie Deane was appointed as Vice-Dean for Research, Postgraduate Studies, and Internationalisation in the Faculty of Law, officially starting July 1, 2024. She brings over two decades of experience from UNISA and plans to develop strategic partnerships with industry and academic institutions while advancing the faculty's internationalisation efforts.



Prof Solomon facilitates MoU with Delhi University

Prof Hussein Solomon delivered keynote addresses at prestigious Indian universities, including Jawaharlal Nehru University and Jamia Millia Islamia, focusing on India's role in African security. A significant outcome was the pending finalisation of a comprehensive MoU with Delhi University to expand collaborative research, PhD supervision, and joint funding proposals across multiple disciplines.



Virtual panel discussion on Gaza crisis

The UFS hosted a virtual panel discussion on July 24, 2024, addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the Free State Centre for Human Rights. The event brought together diverse scholars to explore ethical and political dimensions of universities' engagement with pressing global injustices.



Empowering female voices in collaborative online international learning

The inaugural international conference for the British Academy/Leverhulme-funded project "Female Voices in the Third Space" was held on March 18, 2024, at Coventry Conference Centre in hybrid mode. The conference attracted 70 participants worldwide from Brazil, South Africa, China, Vietnam, and European countries, focusing on equality, diversity, and inclusion in South-North Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL).



2. Green Futures

Physics student receives CV Raman International Fellowship

PhD student Tebogo Motsei's research on sodium-ion supercapacitor/batteries earned recognition for developing environmentally friendly energy storage solutions using recycled materials. Her team successfully created a self-healing battery that performs as well as lithium-ion batteries while being more cost-effective.



Dr Kamwendo champions gender-inclusive climate action in Africa

Dr Juliet Kamwendo from the UFS's Centre for Gender and Africa Studies served as a gender expert at the African Union Development Agency workshop in Burkina Faso from March 25-29, 2024. The workshop focused on the AFR100 initiative, which aims to restore forests and degraded land across Africa by 2030 with an emphasis on gender equality.

UFS and Germany's HSWT forge partnership to foster innovation and development

The UFS welcomed a delegation from Germany's Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences to strengthen collaboration in agricultural research and education. The visit was part of the EU-funded Intra-Africa Mobility Programme CaReFoAfrica, focused on climate change and risk mitigation capacity development across seven African universities.



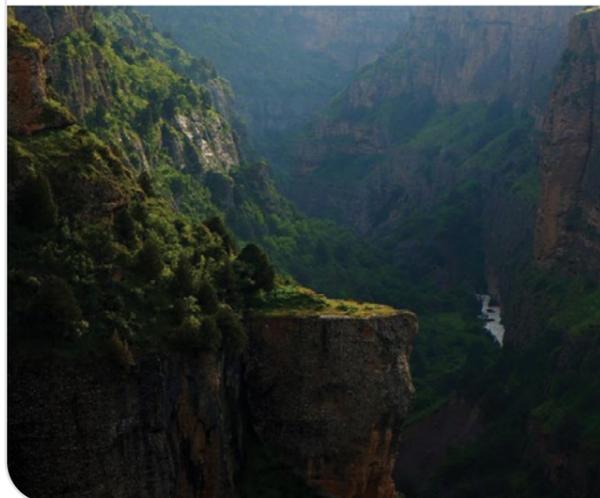
ARU secures two Norwegian-South Africa grants for mountain research

The Afromontane Research Unit secured two grants through Norwegian-South African bilateral programmes focusing on sustainable use of natural resources in mountain ecosystems. The NatuRA programme brings together ecological data and traditional knowledge from Alpine areas in both South Africa and Norway.



Southern African Mountain Conference 2025 returns to UFS

The UFS's Afromontane Research Unit announced the second Southern African Mountain Conference (SAMC2025) to be held March 17-20, 2025, at Champagne Sports Resort. The conference, themed "Southern African Mountains Overcoming Boundaries and Barriers," will feature three renowned keynote speakers and build on the success of the 2022 conference.



EnSci lecturer brings engineering solutions to real-world problems

Sandile Dladla, an engineering lecturer, focuses on water management solutions and real-world applications of engineering to improve quality of life. He was involved in the Higher Education Partnerships in Sub-Saharan Africa project in 2024 and has been selected to visit the University of Lincoln to observe innovative engineering education approaches. 🌍



3. Identity, Culture, and Heritage

African languages and gender explored in new book

The book 'Thetha Sizwe' was launched, exploring contemporary South African debates on African languages and gender politics. The work, funded by the Andrew Mellon Foundation, aims to craft new philosophical spaces for developing Sesotho as an academic language.



Vibrant Multilingual Mokete Celebration

The UFS Qwaqwa Campus hosted its annual Kovies Multilingual Mokete on September 13, 2024, themed "Our Diversity is Our Strength." The event celebrated linguistic and cultural diversity through traditional attire, performances, and cuisine, fostering community belonging and acceptance.



DRD hosts another successful International postdoctoral day

The Directorate of Research Development hosted its second annual International Postdoctoral Day celebrating cultural diversity among postdoctoral fellows. The event featured cultural presentations including culinary heritage, music, and dance from fellows representing countries including Zambia, India, Nigeria, China, Iran, Zimbabwe, and Cameroon.



Africa Day Celebrations

The UFS hosted an Africa Day celebration on its Bloemfontein Campus under the theme “World Citizenship and African Higher Education: Preparing Students for a Connected World.” The event, organised by the Office for International Affairs, featured discussions on addressing inequality, decolonising academic discourse, promoting social justice, and moving towards equity and renewal.



Art lecturer secures NYC scholarship

Johandi du Plessis-Kleynhans, a junior lecturer in UFS's Department of Fine Arts, who is becoming a pioneer in installation art, received the prestigious Ampersand Fellowship and Residency to study installation art in New York City.



Prof Van der Westhuizen presents world premieres of contemporary solo violoncello works in Vienna and Salzburg

Prof Anmari van der Westhuizen represented South Africa internationally, performing at Bard College, New York, and at world premiere concerts in Vienna and Salzburg. Her performances featured contemporary solo cello works by both Austrian and South African composers, showcasing cultural exchange through music. 🎻



4. Complex Systems for Sustainable Development

UFS students compete in International Super Computing Competition

Two UFS students, Itumeleng Khaka and Nhlonipho Shezi, were selected for the National Team competing at the International Supercomputing Conference Student Cluster Competition after their team placed third in the national round. Another student, Limpho Senatla, won the prize for female student with most potential.



UFS PhD students attend Swiss-African Winter School

Two PhD students, Reabetswe Parkies and Crespen Ndlovu, were among 30 students selected internationally to attend the inaugural Swiss-African PhD Winter School on Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Switzerland. The programme focused on sustainable development research and interdisciplinary dialogue.



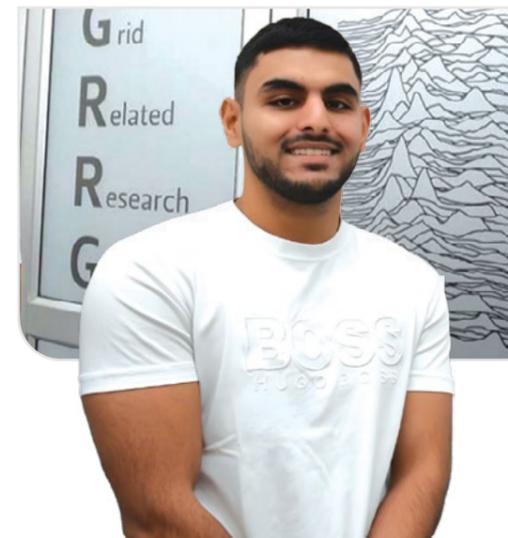
Strategic Marketing students excel in Tata scholarship program

Eight final-year Strategic Marketing students received postgraduate scholarships from Tata Motors after presenting innovative marketing ideas for Tata trucks and buses. This collaboration between UFS and Tata Motors has been ongoing since 2012.



Young applied scientist participates in winter university project in Pskov

Muhammad Cassim, a second-year Engineering Sciences student, was selected to participate in a winter university project in Pskov, Russia. The programme aims to strengthen relationships among young engineers through education, project work, and cultural activities while focusing on complexity science and synchronisation in complex networks.



UFS joins SARIMA initiative to boost global visibility and research excellence

The UFS joined the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) initiative to enhance global visibility and research excellence. The project helps the university benchmark against leading Tier 1 institutions, adopt best practices in research management, and improve capacity for securing international grants through standardised procedures and benchmarking exercises.



Youth Leadership in focus during Model UN Summit 2024

The third annual Kovesies Model United Nations Summit took place from July 12-14, 2024, with the theme “Building Sustainable Bridges for the World We Want.” Deputy Minister Buti Manamela delivered the keynote address, emphasising African solutions to global challenges and the importance of youth leadership in achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

Amrut Foundation hosts Inaugural Innovathon at UFS

The Amrut Foundation partnered with the UFS to host an inaugural innovation competition at the Qwaqwa Campus, designed to identify and support student social enterprises that generate profit while contributing to public good. Five teams were shortlisted for the regional finals based on their social entrepreneurship models and sustainability plans.



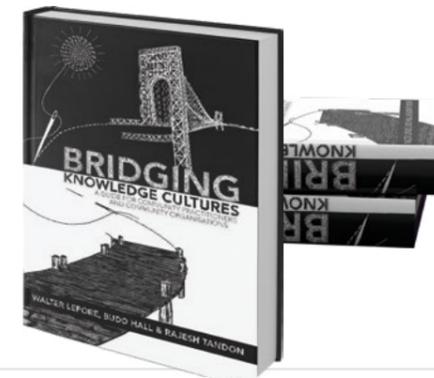
Global Social Innovation Indaba Sparks Action

A three-day conference at the UFS’s Bloemfontein Campus brought together international leaders and innovators under the theme “People Powered Change.” The event featured panel discussions on challenging power dynamics and redefining global exchange, inspiring attendees to continue working toward social innovation and change.

5. Health and Well-being

UFS celebrates inclusion in international book on knowledge cultures

The Directorate of Community Engagement contributed Chapter 10 to the book ‘Bridging Knowledge Cultures,’ focusing on rural health education. The chapter explored knowledge gaps and recommendations for improving health outcomes in the Xhariep District.



UFS and University of Virginia (UVA) collaboration enhances global health education

The UFS and the University of Virginia continued their decade-long global health collaboration by hosting four UVA students from July 6 to August 9, 2024. The pilot program involves UFS’s School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences and UVA’s Centre for Global Health Equity, focusing on interprofessional collaboration and addressing global health challenges.



Dr Mutshidzi Mulondo Wins Prestigious Global Health Award

Dr Mutshidzi Mulondo from the Faculty of Health Sciences won the prestigious Zenith Global Health Award in the “Mental Health and Well-being” category at the Global Health Summit in London. She shared insights on eco-anxiety and the intersection of climate change and mental health, having also participated in UN assemblies in New York prior to the London event.



World Food Day highlights NSH's impact on food security and student success

The No Student Hungry (NSH) Programme, launched in 2011, supports academically deserving students who don’t qualify for NSFAS with food bursaries including daily meals or monthly food parcels. The programme incorporates fresh vegetables from university food gardens and aims to eradicate food insecurity on campus entirely.





Community Outreach Initiative in Turflaagte

UFS students through the South Africa-Sweden University Forum (SASUF) and Kovsie Act reached out to the Turflaagte community in August 2024. The initiative provided soup, clothing, and skills building in celebration of Women's Month, aligning with UN SDGs of Zero Hunger and No Poverty.

UFS trauma surgeon inducted as American College of Surgeons Fellow

Dr Emmanuel Arko-Cobbah, a trauma surgeon from the Department of Surgery, was inducted as a fellow of the American College of Surgeons. He was one of 1,800 candidates worldwide and hopes this achievement will showcase South African medical expertise globally while inspiring others to pursue similar recognition.



UFS members form part of change at the 2024 FISU World Forum

Jerry Laka (KovsieSport Director) formed part of a delegation representing South Africa at the 2024 FISU World Forum in Zagreb, Croatia. They signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Croatian Academic Sports Federation to advance student sports development and collaboration.

Paralympic Success for Louzanne

Louzanne Coetzee won bronze in the women's 1500m T11 event at the 2024 Paralympics in Paris, achieving a personal best time of 4:35.49. This marked her second Paralympic medal and highlighted her exceptional talent in what was recorded as the fastest T11 race ever. 🏅



6. UFS Without Borders: Collaboration, Recognition, Impact



UFS ranked among top value universities for international students

Study Abroad Aide ranked UFS as the eighth best value university for international students among 39 South African universities, placing it in the top 13% globally. The ranking highlights universities offering high-quality education at affordable prices.

UFS wins double honors at CGMA Professional Awards

The UFS secured the CGMA Leadership Award for 'Excellent University Partner' and lecturer **Michelle de Lange** won the 'Elite University Educator of the Year Award.' These awards recognise excellence in finance and accounting education.



Kagiso selected for prestigious Mandela Washington Fellowship

Kagiso Ngake, Coordinator for International Partnerships at UFS's Office for International Affairs, was selected for the 2024 Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders. He began his fellowship in June 2024, embracing the opportunity to engage with fellow participants and organisations with interests in Africa.



iKudu Closing Conference Celebrates Five Ground Breaking Years

The UFS's Office for International Affairs hosted the iKudu closing conference, celebrating five years of achievements and launching the future iKudu network. The project exceeded its goals by achieving 57 COIL projects, with Project Manager Chevon Slambee highlighting the kudu's spiralling horns as a symbol of the project's strength and resilience.



Community Engagement Festival showcasing entrepreneurship

The UFS's Engaged Scholarship Office hosted a week-long Community Engagement Festival focused on sustainability, entrepreneurship, and social justice for students. The Community Engagement project has grown from six members to 200 individuals over the course of 2024, with successful initiatives including a worm farming project that teaches students income generation through composting.

OIA attends the 26th annual IEASA Conference

The Office for International Affairs attended the 26th Annual IEASA Conference in Johannesburg from August 20-23, 2024. The conference theme was "Navigating Internationalisation in Challenging Times," addressing current challenges in international education.



UFS Hosts IASIA Conference on Public Administration

The UFS hosted the prestigious International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) 2024 Conference, attracting 280 academics and practitioners. The event focused on "Alternative Service Delivery and Sustainable Societal Responsiveness" and was organised by the Department of Public Administration and Management.

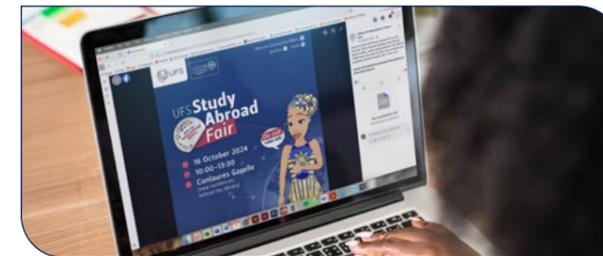
Internationalisation Officer Gets Global Recognition

Matome Mokoena from the UFS's Office for International Affairs was selected as one of 30 top participants globally to present at the DIES Management of Internationalisation Training Course 10-Year Jubilee in Germany. The event celebrated a decade of international collaboration in higher education and equipped professionals with internationalisation management skills.



Mbali Moiketsi selected for US International Visitor Leadership Programme

Mbali Moiketsi, International Scholarships portfolio leader in the Office for International Affairs, was selected for the prestigious US International Visitor Leadership Programme from September 13 to October 7, 2024. The programme represents a significant professional exchange initiative with participants nominated by US embassies globally rather than through direct application.



UFS Study Abroad Fair 2024: Expanding global opportunities for students

The annual Study Abroad Fair connected UFS students with international partners including DAAD, Fulbright, SANORD, Campus France, and DHET. The events on the Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa campuses showcased various study, research, and exchange programmes, aligning with the UFS's strategic commitment to internationalisation.

UFS scientists recognised among the World's Top 2% of Scientists

Multiple UFS scientists were recognised in Stanford University's World's Top 2% Scientists list for 2024, compiled with Elsevier using Scopus data. Prof Charles Haddad from Zoology and Entomology was specifically highlighted, ranking 742 out of 17,009 authors in his subfield, attributing success to international collaboration and high publication productivity.



UFS delegation visits BUAN to strengthen ties in research and education

A UFS delegation visited the Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN) to strengthen research and education partnerships. The visit resulted in agreements for quick implementation steps including MoU signing, student and staff exchanges, and co-supervised research projects, particularly in agricultural and natural resources.



UFS Business School signs MoU with University West, Sweden

The UFS Business School signed a Memorandum of Understanding with University West, Sweden, to develop academic cooperation in research, student exchanges, and collaborative projects. The partnership emphasises work-integrated learning as an extension of engaged scholarship, with potential for expanding such initiatives across the UFS.





UFS and the University of Zambia launch transformative student delegation visit

A UFS delegation led by the Executive Director of Student Affairs, Temba Hlasho, visited the University of Zambia for a transformative week-long exchange programme. The collaboration focuses on holistic student development, social justice, global knowledge exchange, and leadership development, setting an example for international academic partnerships.

UFS students shine at Coventry University's International Audit Wee

Five UFS School of Accountancy students became the first from South Africa and the Global South to participate in Coventry University's prestigious International Audit Week. The students, selected from top performers in Postgraduate Programmes in Chartered Accountancy, demonstrated exceptional technical competence and elevated the UFS's international reputation in accountancy education.



2024 European Association for International Education (EAIE) Conference in Toulouse, France

From 17 to 18 September 2024, Bulelwa Moikwatlhai, Assistant Director of the OIA, and Kagiso Ngake, OIA Partnership portfolio leader, represented the UFS at the 2024 European Association for International Education (EAIE) Conference in Toulouse, France. This conference served as a vital platform for internationalisation practitioners, catalysing international engagement and enabling the UFS to showcase opportunities for collaboration. By communicating the UFS vision and highlighting its flagship projects, the OIA leveraged this event to strengthen the university's profile and attract international funding, faculty interests, and collaborative ventures.

Mittweida University of Applied Sciences visits the UFS

Prof Volker Tolkmitt, Rector of the Mittweida University of Applied Sciences, and Dr Cornelius Hagenmeier, and Prof Anthea Rhoda, Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the UFS signed a Memorandum of Understanding, as an expression of commitment to collaborate. They visited focal points of excellence, including Social Work, the High Computing Centre, the Physics Department and the Merensky Group for Airborne Geological Image Classification (MAGIC). During the visit to the Qwaqwa Campus on 12 September 2024, the delegation met with senior leadership on the campus and had the opportunity to discuss the community engagement programme led by the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies, mountain research led by the Afromontane Research Unit, the women in leadership mentorship programme led by Prof Aliza le Roux, the intercultural communication and competencies programme in the Faculty of The Humanities, and the energy nexus led by the Centre for Global Change. The meetings concluded with the delegation discussing the complementary programmes, projects, and research of their university as areas of synergy and strengthening the Qwaqwa leg of the newly signed Memorandum of Understanding. 🤝



CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

The UFS is home to numerous centres such as the ones we spotlight in the 2024 report - all committed to comprehensive internationalisation.



Afromontane Research Unit (ARU)

This is the flagship research group of the Qwaqwa Campus, with research affiliates throughout UFS faculties and internationally, informing global mountain research theory and practice and contributing to mountain related policy and governance from an African perspective.

Function

- Contributes intellectually and practically to the sustainable development discourse of the Maloti-Drakensberg as a unique social-ecological system.
- Places the poorly studied Southern African montane systems (i.e. those south of the Congo rainforest and Tanzania) IN the continental and global mountain-research-, policy and governance arena.
- Facilitates the development of a mountain-research 'community of practice' in Africa that will lead African mountain research from within Africa.
- Informs mountain hypotheses, theories and impacts of global significance from an African perspective, and thus contribute to strengthening the role of the South in the global mountain- research agenda.

Campus	Head
Qwaqwa	Prof Ralph Clark

[Click here to read more on the ARU.](#)



Centre for Global Change (CGC)

This is a flagship initiative under the Global Change Research Plan established by the Department of Science and Innovation through the National Research Foundation.

Function

- Conducts engaged research and projects on risks faced by the Maluti-a-Phofung communities to ensure societal impact;
- Addresses challenges, including but not limited to those arising from water, energy, and local social issues;
- Increases adaptive capacities through identification, training, and implementation of supportive and innovative interventions.

Campus	Head
Qwaqwa	Prof Patricks Otomo

[Click here to read more on the CGC.](#)

Centre for Environmental Management (CEM)

This centre provides a platform for students to obtain postgraduate degrees in Environmental Management, Integrated Water Resource Management, or a diploma in Integrated Water Resource Management as part-time courses while being able to continue in full-time employment.

Function

CEM provides education and training, conducts applied research, offers interlinked expert services to promote best environmental and water management practices. The centre applies a multidisciplinary approach to developing postgraduate students' competencies across Africa.

Centre for Health Systems Research and Development (CHSR&D)

This centre stems from a rich tradition of research and training in medical sociology and sociology of health.

Function

- Generates and disseminates scientific knowledge on health and health systems - including policies, strategies, practices, and priority programmes - and use this knowledge to promote health systems strengthening.
- Develops capacity for health systems analysis and strengthening via implementation science and postgraduate research training.

Campus	Head
Bloemfontein	Prof Michelle Engelbrecht

[Click here to read more on the CHSR&D.](#)



Centre for Development Support (CDS)

This is a progressive research and development unit within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences which aims to promote sustainable human development in the broader South African society through its research projects.

Function

- Conducts research which enables and facilitates development initiatives, programmes, and academic excellence
- Builds capacity through research, training, and development programmes
- Focuses on three niche areas, namely; human development and the capabilities approach; urban economies, inequalities and urban processes; and vulnerable populations, their environments, organisation and communities (for example, CBOs, NGOs and social enterprises).
- Develops and forms part of a diverse network of national, broader regional and international development expertise.

Campus	Heads
Bloemfontein	Profs Lochner Marais and Melanie Walker

[Click here to read more on the CDS.](#)

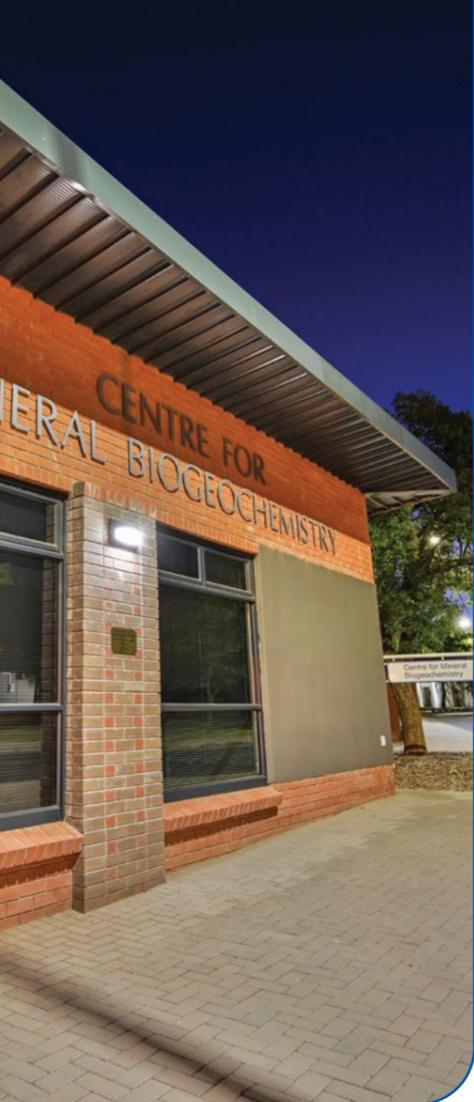


The number and diversity of students CEM has attracted over the years is a testament to the successful way the courses are run and the value it offers to the marketplace.

Campus	Head
Bloemfontein	Prof Olusola Ololade

[Click here to read more on the CEM.](#)





Centre for Mineral Biogeochemistry (CMBG)

This centre's mandate is to promote the science of biogeochemistry in South Africa, collaborating nationally with industry teams in the mining and agricultural sectors to contribute towards sustainable agriculture and sanitary conditions for South Africans.

Function

The Mineral Biogeochemical Research Infrastructure Platform (BIOGRIP) node, established in 2019, is housed in the centre.

This South African research platform is funded by the Department of Science and Innovation. It aims to drive biogeochemical knowledge creation and application by developing world-class analytical facilities, improving monitoring of key biogeochemical environmental variables, and providing technical capacity, training, support, and scientific leadership in biogeochemical research.

BIOGRIP consists of a network of research laboratories organised into four main nodes, each hosted by a South African university. These nodes support discipline-specific research and larger-scale integrated and interdisciplinary efforts. BIOGRIP collaborates with other research infrastructure platforms and provides analytical support to academic, public, and private sector partners. The platform addresses environmental and social issues, including water, soil, waste management, air quality, and human evolution, contributing to a vibrant and thriving economy.

<p>Campus Bloemfontein</p>	<p>Heads Dr Roger Diamond (Director UCT) Dr Mariana Erasmus (Vice Director UFS)</p>
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[Click here to read more on the CMBG.](#)



South African Doping Control Laboratory (SADoCoL)

The South African Doping Control Laboratory (SADoCoL) at the University of the Free State (UFS) is an ISO17025 and World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)-accredited laboratory. It is the only WADA-accredited laboratory on the African continent and has been operational since the early 1980s.

Function

SADoCoL performs analytical testing to detect the use of prohibited substances or methods by athletes, primarily through the analysis of human biological samples like urine and blood. The laboratory ensures quality service delivery through stringent quality management and continuous technique upgrades.

<p>Campus Bloemfontein</p>	<p>Head Hanno du Preez</p>
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[Click here to read more on the SADoCoL.](#)

Centre for Microscopy

This centre provides microscopy services to all the departments at the UFS, as well as other universities, research institutions and private companies.

Function

The centre's state of the art microscopes include:

- JEOL F200 high-resolution transmission electron microscope (HRTEM)
- JSM-7800F Extreme-resolution Analytical Field Emission SEM
- Philips CM100 Analytical Transmission Electron Microscope (TEM)
- Nikon E-2000 Confocal Laser Scanning Microscope (CLSM)
- Nikon AZ100 Stereo Microscope

<p>Campus Bloemfontein</p>	<p>Head Prof JJ Terblans</p>
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[Click here to read more on the Centre for Microscopy.](#)



Free State Centre for Human Rights (FSCHR)

This centre is a critical, interdisciplinary, and contextually engaged research, advocacy, and legal-practice institution focusing on the relationship between human rights and transformation.

Function

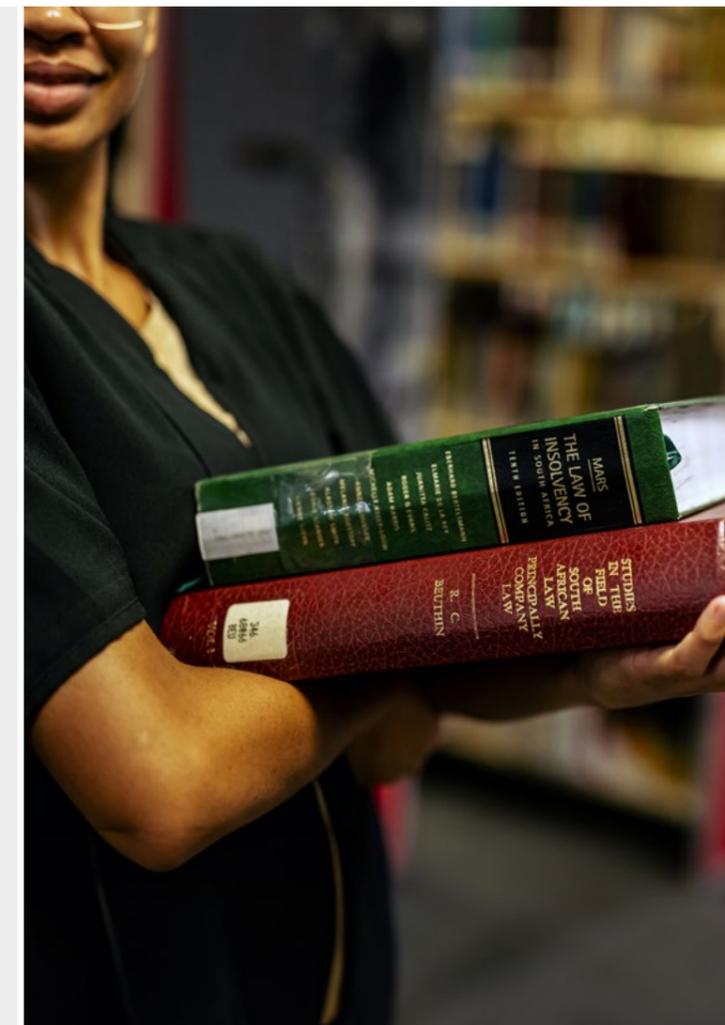
The FSCHR's work coalesces around three thematic focus areas: impoverishment, democracy, and identity.

It consists of three divisions: the Research and Postgraduate Division, which focuses on human rights and transformation; the Advocacy Division, which promotes transformation through human rights education and advocacy; and the Legal Services Division, which operates as a public interest litigation unit.

The Centre also offers interdisciplinary postgraduate programs, including a Master's in Human Rights, a Master's Degree by Dissertation, and a doctoral program in Human Rights. 🌐

<p>Campus Bloemfontein</p>	<p>Head Prof Danie Brand</p>
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[Click here to read more on the FSCHR.](#)





3

The Office for International Affairs (OIA) is the institutional hub for internationalisation at the University of the Free State. It provides strategic leadership, coordination, and enabling support for the implementation of the UFS Internationalisation Strategy across the institution. In collaboration with faculties, campuses, centres, and support divisions, the OIA advances comprehensive internationalisation by facilitating international partnerships, supporting research internationalisation, driving internationalisation at home, and enabling student and staff mobility. While also serving as a first point of contact for international students and staff, the OIA's primary role is to catalyse, align, and support internationalisation as a shared institutional endeavour.

OFFICE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



Strategic Projects, Networks, and Virtual Engagement

PORTFOLIO LEADERS:
Bonolo Makhalemele and Chevon Slambee

Writing retreat at The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS)

A successful writing retreat took place at The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) from 22 to 24 January 2024. During the retreat, the conference proceedings for the iKudu project deliverables were finalised in preparation for a peer review in March 2024. The iKudu project remains steadfast on a positive trajectory, diligently meeting the outlined project deliverables as articulated in the initial project application.

Members of the iKudu project at the Hague University of Applied Sciences.



The University of the Free State delegation with staff from the University of Virginia, USA.

The University of Virginia (UVA) Centre for Global Health Equity Case Competition

The OIA Strategic Projects portfolio and academics from the UFS School of Nursing (Prof Champion Nyoni and Kelebogile Manjinja) established a collaboration with the UVA in the third quarter of 2023, which resulted in the development of a research case for the UVA's annual competition that took place in early 2024 ([Click here to read Research Case](#)).

The UVA Global Health Case Competition challenges all UVA students to collaborate in interdisciplinary teams, contributing their insight, problem-solving skills, and disciplinary perspectives to addressing complex global health issues. The competition further promotes understanding of the structural and social determinants of health, incorporates faculty mentorship, and focuses on underserved settings. It provides an avenue for students to design real interventions that they can pursue as full-scale research projects.

The UFS counterparts visited the UVA between 25 January and 4 February 2024, not only to serve as an advisory board for the students who entered the competition, but also to establish new areas of collaboration in the School of Nursing as well as the international offices of the two institutions.

Moreover, the UFS stakeholders were invited to serve as judges for the competition, which took place on Saturday 3 February 2024.

Visit from Amber Steen (University of Virginia, USA)

The UFS hosted Amber Steen from the University of Virginia (UVA) on the Bloemfontein Campus between 20 and 24 February 2024 for the finalisation of a collaborative project conceptualised in 2023. This is a collaboration between the UFS School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SoHRS), the OIA Strategic Projects portfolio, and the UVA's Centre for Global Health Equity. The collaborative effort includes the introduction of new teaching material, and a related assignment based on communicating health-care research to the population through a social media artefact in an understandable manner. Considering the UVA's expressed interest in acquainting their students with our distinctive context, the UFS is well placed to involve UVA students in enriching the diversity and perspectives offered in this project within an interprofessional setting. The exchange of this information will contribute positively to the continuous institutional push for internationalisation, providing both UFS and UVA students with valuable insights into the broader world. This project was implemented between June and August 2024.



From the left: Bonolo Makhalemele (OIA), Dr Anke van der Merwe, Amber Steen, and Prof Corlia van Vuuren. Bottom: Simba Matema and John-Paul Khumalo.

Coventry COIL conference

The Centre for Global Learning (GLEA) at the Coventry University hosted a COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) conference and partner meeting from 18 to 20 March 2024, which was attended by colleagues from the OIA. The purpose of the visit was to strengthen capacity in global South-North collaborations in Internationalisation of the Curriculum (IoC) and COIL, which are two key deliverables for the project linked to sustainability.



Hot Topic Dialogue Debate attendees.

South Africa-Sweden University Forum (SASUF) Research and Innovation Week 2024

The 2024 SASUF Research and Innovation Week, hosted in Sweden from 13 to 17 May, was an extremely fervent occasion that brought together researchers, academics, students, university officials, and many other stakeholders from both South Africa and Sweden. The forum, an internationalisation project aimed towards strengthening ties between South Africa and Sweden in research and innovation, hosted a series of projects throughout the week, ranging from satellite events, workshops, and parallel poster presentations – themed around the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the six SASUF subthemes.

Alongside the sustainability forum, the SASUF student network hosted a week-long series of activities in the same format (satellite events and workshops). The satellite events, which had the highest attendance (virtual and in-person attendance), were hosted by the SASUF student network, with the following themes: Climate action and biodiversity and Food security. The student network played and continues to play a pivotal role in validating the students' contributions in discussions about sustainability, and most notably, the UN SDGs. >>



Members of the iKudu project at the Coventry University, UK, for the COIL conference.



Student representatives, coordinators, and academics deliberating during the Hot Topic Dialogue Debate

Among the notable initiatives that took place in conjunction with the SASUF Sustainability Forum was 'The Hot Topic Dialogue Debate'. Hosted by the UFS at Malmö University in Sweden, the dialogue debate explored and discerned a comparative analysis of the extent to which the rapid growth of technology, particularly digital learning management systems (LMSs), has exacerbated or addressed concerns about digital oppression by looking at inclusivity, equality, and accessibility.

Looking at both the Swedish and South African contexts of this theme/topic, many remarkable contributions have been made, with the underlying question being whether the global rapid pace towards technological reliance in the teaching and learning space is successful in doing what technology is expected to do (i.e., improving the livelihoods of humans, promoting access, and improving the convenience of performing tasks), or whether it is causing more anxiety and inconvenience – in the two national contexts.

Some of the responses and contributions by the panellists included propositions for the government to implement a stricter Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy that prioritises inclusive and equitable access to technology and technological infrastructure for members of rural South Africa, and importantly, the teaching and learning sector for both learners and educators. In the Swedish context, other sources of digital oppression and anxiety were attached to the exclusionary and isolative nature that technological overreliance causes, eradicating one of the most fundamental qualities of teaching and learning, which is human interaction, socialisation, and collaboration.

The SASUF student network continues to concretise the perspective and mandate that students should be key stakeholders in conversations, decision-making processes, continuing research initiatives, and collaborations that allude to the teaching and learning space. This is premised on the fact that students are universities' primary target audience.



The SASUF Student Network during a 'speed-dating' activity.



Dr Jared McDonald (left), and Simba Matema representing the UFS at the 2024 SASUF Research and Innovation Week.

UFS SASUF and University of Venda (Univen) Collaboration

The University of the Free State and the University of Venda's SASUF student structures hosted a dialogue on 11 September 2024 as part of the University of Venda's Internationalisation Week.

Titled *The role that student structures play in amplifying student voices and enabling internationalisation in higher education institutions*, this dialogue aimed to promote student involvement and representation in internationalisation across all institutions. Understanding the traditional political nature of student representation structures in universities, the dialogue encouraged the depoliticisation of structures that serve the sole purpose of internationalisation, such as SASUF.

With a full house, the dialogue brought to light

some elements of internationalisation that could be improved by universities, as well as demonstrated the existing and sustainable impact of internationalisation through student structures.

The panel consisted of three SASUF student structure chairpersons from the University of Mpumalanga, the University of Venda, as well as the University of the Free State. These panellists spoke about their past and current experiences of institutions of higher learning in relation to internationalisation, its understanding, as well as its promulgation. This initiative was an immense success, as gauged by the contributions of students and staff who were in attendance.



Seithati Ramonaheng and Chevon Slambee representing the UFS at the SANORD's 2024 Annual Scientific Conference.

16th Southern African-Nordic Centre (SANORD) Annual Scientific Conference hosted at the University of the Western Cape (UWC)

The University of the Western Cape (UWC) hosted the 16th Southern African-Nordic Centre (SANORD) Annual Scientific Conference from 4 to 6 December 2024. This conference is held annually to exchange knowledge and foster collaboration between institutions of higher learning in Southern Africa and those in the Nordic region. The conference theme was *Social and Epistemic Justice: Imagining Sustainable Futures through Agency*. Through workshops, dialogues, presentations, and partnerships, members of the delegation contributed to addressing global challenges and promoting sustainable development.

The University of the Free State (UFS) was represented by Prof Anthea Rhoda, Chevon Slambee, and Seithati Ramonaheng from the Office for International Affairs. Prof Rhoda and Chevon Slambee attended the SASUF engagements, along with selected conference workshops and plenary sessions. Seithati Ramonaheng presented on Friday 6 December on the topic: *Rethinking the Utility of IKS and Foregrounding Indigenous Knowledge Paradigms in the South African Higher Education System*. The presentation was extremely well received and sparked robust discussions on Western hegemony in knowledge production and the critical need to advocate for the inclusion and recognition of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). In conclusion, Ramonaheng reminded the delegates that higher education institutions need to serve as engines of social justice, cultural preservation, and sustainable development.

The conference concluded with a tribute to Prof Brian O'Connell (BOC), who was one of the founding members of SANORD. SANORD remains a testament to Prof O'Connell's vision, with its continuing operations committed to upholding his legacy by advancing global collaboration and educational excellence. The outcomes of the UFS' participation in this conference were as follows: (i) to enable increased research collaboration within the SANORD network, (ii) to promote active participation in SASUF 2030 across all work packages, and (iii) to enhance uptake of the BOC scholarships among UFS students. 🌍





International Partnerships, Collaborative Degrees, and Outgoing Mobility

PORTFOLIO LEADER:
Kagiso Ngake

Virtual Benchmarking for Internationalisation

The Partnerships Portfolio conducted a series of virtual benchmarking exercises, focusing on enhancing internationalisation initiatives and promoting student mobility. In the month of March, two virtual benchmarking exercises were conducted with Stellenbosch University and the University of Cape Town (UCT) to strengthen internationalisation operations and implementation.

Collaborating with the Internationalisation @ Home (I@H) team, similar meetings were organised with partner universities abroad, namely:

- Sciences Po Bordeaux (France)
- Radboud University (the Netherlands)
- University of Bremen (Germany)
- University of Applied Sciences Kufstein (Austria)
- University of Groningen (the Netherlands)

The objectives of these engagements were to strengthen partnerships, boost student exchange mobility, and explore funding opportunities.

Visit by Kenyan Education Attaché

On 4 March 2024, the Office for International Affairs hosted two delegates from the High Commission of Kenya to South Africa – Adan Mohamed Ibrahim, the Education Attaché of Kenya, and Counsellor Rulofs Muse Makokha. The delegates went on a site tour of the Science Education Centre on the Bloemfontein Campus, which was facilitated by Dr Cobus van Breda from the UFS Faculty of Education.

Following the tour, the delegation visited the UFS Library's African Languages Press and Digital Scholarship Centre, exploring their keen interest in indigenous languages by investigating Swahili resources. To conclude the day, a meeting was held with internationalisation champions from the UFS School of Nursing and the Faculty of Law to explore collaborative opportunities in health sciences.

UFS Students Embark on Student Exchange Opportunities at Universities in Germany

Karabo Masenya and Leonore Visagie, both undergraduate students in the University of the Free State Department of Social Work, eagerly embarked on their academic journey at the Fulda University of Applied Sciences in Germany, which started on 2 April 2024. Their participation was part of an international social work programme offered by the Fulda University of Applied Sciences in Germany.

Similarly, Sanelisiwe Khumalo, a master's candidate on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus, departed on 1 April 2024 for her exchange programme at the University of Freiburg in Germany. These students represented the UFS internationally as they embarked on this enriching academic experience abroad, fostering international collaboration and cultural exchange.



The University of Applied Sciences Schmalkalden Partner Visit to the UFS: Strengthening International Student Mobility

In May 2024, Thais Correia, the Student Mobility Coordinator of the University of Applied Sciences Schmalkalden, visited the University of the Free State with the aim of enhancing international student mobility. The primary objective of her visit was to exchange ideas on student mobility, discuss upcoming scholarships, and gain a comprehensive understanding of UFS systems and processes. Correia's interactions with key UFS personnel were aimed at fostering collaboration and ensuring the smooth implementation of mobility programmes.

During her visit from 6 to 10 May, Correia had significant meetings with various UFS departments. She met with the OIA to review the 12 mobility scholarships available to UFS students from October 2024 to March 2025, discussing strategies for strengthening the collaboration. Other meetings included stakeholders from the UFS Sasol library, the Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS), as well as Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA). These meetings focused on improving administrative workflow, marketing academic resources, ensuring inclusivity in mobility programmes, and promoting quality UFS accommodation to international students.

Beyond formal meetings, Correia took part in cultural activities, including an educational tour of the Bloemfontein informal settlements. These experiences offered her insights into the UFS' community engagement efforts and the broader context of the institution's mission and values. Correia's visit was highly productive, laying the groundwork for successful scholarship implementation and future student exchanges between the UFS and the University of Applied Sciences Schmalkalden.



From the left: Jocelyn Madebe and Anoyolo Magwaca.

UFS Department of Social Work students Erasmus+ exchange at Fulda University of Applied Sciences in Germany

In September 2024, two undergraduate students from the Department of Social Work, Jocelyn Madebe and Anoyolo Magwaca, commenced their Erasmus+ exchange at Fulda University of Applied Sciences in Germany, hosted by the university's Department of Social Work. The exchange was jointly funded by the Erasmus+ programme and Fulda's Department of Social Work as part of a longstanding mobility partnership. The programme offered a practical international academic experience aimed at enhancing student preparedness, cultural competence, and global citizenship. This opportunity directly supports the UFS' strategic objective of producing globally competitive graduates.

CaReFoAfrica Intra-Africa Mobility Programme Campus Visit

From 15 to 19 July 2024, the UFS hosted consortium members of the CaReFoAfrica EU-funded Intra-Africa Mobility Programme on the Bloemfontein Campus. During the week-long visit, Dragan Brković, Project Coordinator of the Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences (HSWT), facilitated a capacity-building workshop for UFS staff, providing guidance on securing European Union funding and developing effective project proposals for collaborative consortia. As part of the workshop, he also highlighted HSWT's expertise in designing socially impactful projects that address critical global challenges.



Members of the CaReFoAfrica consortium delegation to the UFS.



From the left: Kananelo Radimakatso, Bongani Vilakazi, Seithati Ramonaheng, Keabetswe Moeketsi, and Rantsane Lekiti.

UFS at UNIVEN Internationalisation Week

From 9 to 13 September 2024, the UFS participated in the University of Venda's Internationalisation Week to expand regional research collaboration. UFS OIA research assistants Bongani Vilakazi and Kananelo Radimakatso presented their abstract titled *Building Global Partnerships for Sustainable Development: Data and Modelling Science*, which received a top award of recognition. Their presentation outlined sustainable strategies for global data collaboration in joint research environments.



Courtesy Visit by the US Consul General to the University of the Free State

On 13 November 2024, the University of the Free State (UFS) hosted a delegation from the US Consulate General in Johannesburg, led by newly appointed Consul General Stephanie Bunce, who arrived in South Africa in September 2024. The visit served as a courtesy call to introduce the Consul General to the acting Vice-Chancellor, Prof Anthea Rhoda, and to reaffirm the strong diplomatic and academic relationship between the UFS and the US government. During the engagement, the UFS hosted formal meetings with the Office of the Vice-Chancellor and the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences and facilitated a site visit to the Naval Hill Planetarium, which previously benefited from a project supported through a US Embassy grant. Key discussions centred on expanding collaboration in the areas of agriculture and astronomy, with specific attention to scientific engagement. The visit further deepened the UFS' long-standing partnership with the US Consulate and laid the groundwork for enhanced bilateral cooperation.

Dr Omololu Aluko Awarded Africa Platform Fellowship at Ghent University

In December 2024, Dr Omololu Aluko, a senior lecturer in the Department of Biostatistics at the University of the Free State (UFS), was awarded a prestigious Africa Platform Fellowship by Ghent University in Belgium. The fellowship included a €1 000 grant and return airfare to support a two-week research visit to Belgium in 2025. Dr Aluko will be hosted by the Department of Data Analysis and Mathematical Modelling (i-KNOW research group) within Ghent's Faculty of Bioscience Engineering. His research will focus on advancing statistical machine learning methods for analysing oncology and HIV data sets, including comparative modelling using Neural Multi-task Logistic Regression and Bayesian Networks. The fellowship will enable collaborative research, academic exchange, and capacity building in artificial intelligence and health data modelling, with the long-term goal of joint publications and postgraduate supervision between the two institutions. The UFS Office for International Affairs supported Dr Aluko during the grant-writing phase of the application, demonstrating its commitment to enabling outbound researcher mobility and fostering strategic academic partnerships across Africa and Europe.

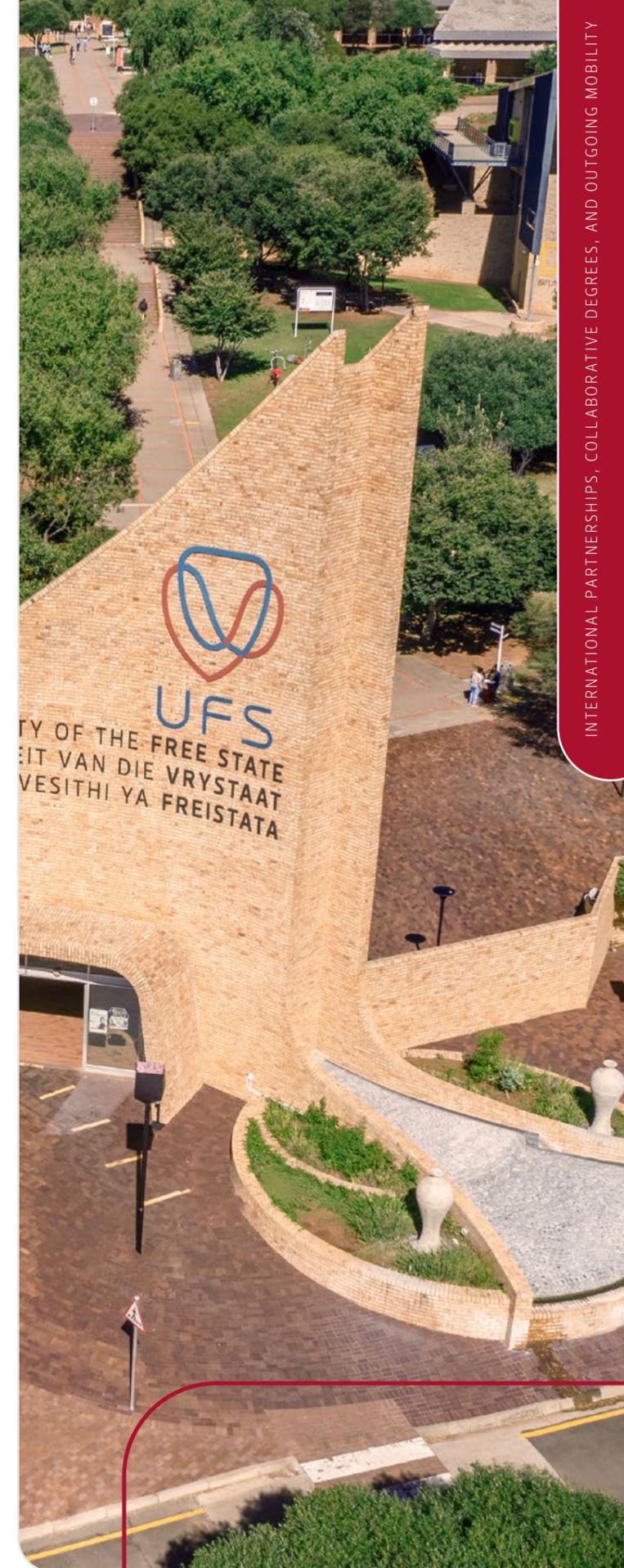


From the left: Kagiso Ngake (UFS), Varkey George (UFS alumnus), Desiree Burenlind (KU), and Dr Brian Unis (KU).

Building Strategic Collaboration with Karlstad University

In 2024, the University of the Free State deepened its partnership with Karlstad University through two key engagement activities hosted by the Office for International Affairs. On 27 February 2024, the UFS welcomed Dr Brian Unis and Desiree Burenlind, senior lecturers from Karlstad's Faculty of Health Sciences, accompanied by UFS alumnus Varkey George. The programme included a meeting with Dr Jeanette Sebaeng, Head of the UFS School of Nursing, where initial collaboration ideas were explored, followed by a tour of the UFS Simulation Lab and a visit to the Centre for Traditional Medicine, hosted by Prof Motlalepula Matsabisa.

Building on this foundation, the OIA hosted Dr Brian Unis for a return benchmarking and collaboration-building visit from 4 to 6 November 2024. The second engagement involved targeted meetings with faculty researchers, programme heads, and internationalisation staff in the School of Nursing and the Department of Pharmacology. The visit culminated in the joint submission of an Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility application focused on nursing exchange and academic cooperation. These engagements underscored the UFS' commitment to fostering strategic, reciprocal partnerships that advance Vision 130 objectives and promote global academic collaboration. 🌍





Comprehensive Internationalisation on the Qwaqwa Campus

PORTFOLIO LEADER:
Bulelwa Moikwatlhai

US Embassy Overview of the Mountain-to-Mountain Project

The UFS Qwaqwa Campus hosted a delegation from the US Embassy at the Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge on 12 February 2024 for the project overview discussion on the Mountain-to-Mountain projects, which concluded in March 2024. The programme started with a visit to one of the weather stations, the Alpine Research Base, which formed part of the project. The delegation also had the opportunity to tour the majestic Maluti Mountains via helicopter. This was followed by the project overview session that covered the Women in Leadership Mentorship programme; the Maluti-a-Phofung Forum; the Master of Community Engagement, which will have its first student intake in 2025; and the Master of Mountain Studies, which is waiting for approval by the Council on Higher Education (CHE).

Strengthening Collaborations: Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences visit to the UFS Qwaqwa Campus

On 30 May 2024, the OIA, in collaboration with the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (NAS) on the Qwaqwa Campus, hosted Prof (Dr) Carsten Lorz, who was accompanied by colleagues from the UFS Bloemfontein Campus, Prof Corli Witthuhn – Professor in Sustainable Food Systems and Development, and Prof Johan van Niekerk, Vice-Dean of NAS – Professor in Sustainable Food Systems and Development. The proceedings were led by Prof Aliza le Roux, with each

NAS head of department giving presentations on their departments. This visit was aimed at strengthening existing ties between the two universities and exploring potential areas of collaboration specific to the Qwaqwa Campus. The meeting concluded with the formalisation of the collaboration through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by Prof (Dr) Lorz. More department-based memoranda of agreement are underway.



Adan Mohamed (centre) on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus.

Kenya High Commission Education Attaché visit to the University of the Free State (UFS) Qwaqwa Campus

Adan Mohamed Ibrahim, Kenya's High Commission Education Attaché, visited the Qwaqwa Campus on 22 May 2024. The visit aimed to explore new collaboration opportunities in mountain research, agriculture, and education.

The meeting concluded with a discussion on facilitating student exchanges and streamlining visa application processes to enhance collaboration between Kenya and South Africa. Ibrahim also had the opportunity to meet Kenyan students and staff members enrolled on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus and attend the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies' memorial lecture.

Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Programme

The Centre for Gender and Africa Studies and the OIA hosted Prof Jesse Lutabingwa from 8 June to 15 August 2024, following a successful grant award from the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Programme. Prof Lutabingwa's fellowship included a series of grant-writing workshops designed to empower the UFS Qwaqwa Campus, researchers, and postgraduate students with the skills and strategies needed to craft compelling proposals, significantly increasing the chances of securing funding to support the university's third-income aspirations. Prof Lutabingwa brings a wealth of experience in internationalisation, specifically on a rural campus, and he has spent time assisting with compiling a global engagement plan.



Heritage commemorations on the Qwaqwa Campus

In September, the OIA – in collaboration with the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies – hosted heritage commemoration events on the Qwaqwa Campus.

A dialogue session, titled *Democracy @ 30: Towards a reimagining of the Qwaqwa we collectively desire*, took place on 27 September and reflected on the progress made and challenges that remain in democratic South Africa. This was a community dialogue aimed at finding purposeful and intentional ideas that sought to identify pathways to build the Qwaqwa we collectively desire in the next 30 years.

On 28 September, the campus also hosted a heritage entrepreneurship pop-up market. Local community members were invited to showcase their dynamic and rich heritage in an entertaining, thought-provoking, and engaging manner. This was to enhance community engagement, visibility, and collaborative pathways within the Qwaqwa community by greatly appreciating indigenous and modern forms of art.

Funding and study abroad opportunities: Department of Higher Education and Training information sessions

The Qwaqwa Campus hosted two information sessions on international scholarships on 18 October 2024, led by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). These sessions were initiated by the Office for International Affairs. In the first session, Dr Temwa Moyo, acting Director for International Scholarships at the DHET, gave a comprehensive presentation on Erasmus+ programmes, which provide universities with opportunities and funding to collaborate on curriculum development for new programmes, capacity building in higher education, and full scholarships for joint master's degrees, among others. In the second student-centred session, the event offered attendees information on various international opportunities through the DHET to support their academic pursuits. Students and staff learned about the benefits of studying abroad, the associated requirements, and the typical application process. The DHET's emphasis on institutional partnerships also highlighted the potential for enriching academic exchange and cultural experiences.

Overall, the DHET international scholarship sessions were a resounding success, with both students and staff attending in numbers. These sessions inspired students and staff to explore the exciting possibilities of global engagements.

Engaged scholarship collaboration with SRC: International Student Council

The OIA on the Qwaqwa Campus is collaborating with the SRC: International Student Council on an engaged scholarship project – a vegetable-growing project. The project aims to offer skills that extend beyond academics, promoting diversity and inclusion and enhancing student experiences while addressing food security and environmental issues. Through this project, international students will work with local students from the Department of Agriculture in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences to grow and donate vegetable harvests to the UFS No Student Hungry programme and to sell them to students and staff on campus as a fundraising exercise. 🍅



Internationalisation @ Home (I@H)

PORTFOLIO LEADER:
Bhekumusa Zikhali

First UBP Training 2024

The Umoja Buddy Programme (UBP) conducts an annual training session designed for its participants. This training equips UBP ambassadors with essential knowledge to effectively support the international students – known as ‘UBP buddies’ – with whom they are paired. While participants are typically senior students, the programme recognises its responsibility to provide this training as a reminder of fundamental principles.

On 26 January 2024, the I@H portfolio conducted one of three trainings through Blackboard Collaborate, embracing the new age of digital space. The training focused on how to have a shared meaning and understanding of internationalisation at the UFS; the role and impact of being an enabler; and facilitating a collaborative working relationship among the ambassadors as they carry out their ambassadorship duties. Lastly, the workshop provided an opportunity for ambassadors to become acquainted with one another, serving as an initial step in building lifelong friendships.

International Mother Language Day

The 2024 commemoration of International Mother Language Day (IMLD) was held on 15 February. The I@H portfolio of the OIA took a comprehensive approach to promoting this day, focusing on engaging audiences and celebrating linguistic diversity, while exploring the potential of technology in advancing multilingual education globally. The use of diverse media such as social media campaigns and impactful video production was engaged, with the aim of raising awareness and appreciation for the significance of mother languages. This year’s celebration was themed *Empowering Linguistic Diversity: Navigating Challenges and Embracing Technology in Celebrating International Mother Language Day*. >>

Orientation of exchange students

On 9 February, the I@H portfolio organised a meet-and-greet event to welcome exchange students joining the UFS for the first semester. The aim was to familiarise them with campus departments such as the Division of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA), Protection Services, and Kopsie Health, as well as to facilitate their adjustment to a new academic and cultural environment. The event showcased different aspects of student life at the UFS, featuring presentations on essential campus resources. The Blackboard platform, crucial for academic navigation, was highlighted for its role in providing access to course materials and submitting assignments. ICT emphasised the accessibility of technical support through the ICT Helpdesk and hotline, while Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA) assured students of assistance with housing-related matters. Constance Banda, the Student Representative Council (SRC) member for the International Student Council, emphasised the importance of social integration alongside academic pursuits, encouraging participation in extracurricular activities and networking opportunities. This holistic approach fostered bonds and embraced cultural diversity, as well as enriching the university experience with lasting memories and friendships.



Staff from the OIA with the new incoming exchange students.

The initiative commenced with curated social media posts designed to resonate with diverse audiences, capture the essence of IMLD, and discuss the role that technology plays in enhancing multilingual education. These posts emphasised cultural importance and encouraged participation in related events.

A significant highlight was the IMLD gala dinner, where Matome Mokoena from the I@H portfolio delivered a speech in support of the Academy for Multilingualism, representing the office's commitment to promoting multilingualism at the University of the Free State. This event provided a platform for networking and garnering support for the cause.

Documenting the commemorative events was vital, as the I@H group captured profound images showcasing the vibrant diversity of languages celebrated on IMLD. This crafted a compelling narrative for the IMLD video, involving meticulous scripting that highlighted the value of linguistic diversity and the potential of technology in multilingual education. In the long run, this incorporated personal stories and global perspectives.

A major milestone was the production of the IMLD video, which was filmed on 21 February to showcase the transformative role of technology in multilingual education. Stakeholders who were pivotal in the success of this event were the Academy of Multilingualism and the UFS Library, which underscored the commitment to fostering awareness and promoting multilingualism on a global scale.



An IMLD cultural presentation by students of the UFS.



The Umoja Buddy Programme Launch 2024.

Launch of Umoja Buddy Programme 2024

On 15 March, the Umoja Buddy Programme (UBP) officially held its event, which served as a welcoming platform for incoming international students (UBP Buddies) and local students (UBP ambassadors). This annual event signifies the commencement of the programme's activities and sets the tone for the year ahead. The primary objective of the event is to cultivate a memorable evening characterised by camaraderie, celebration, and immersion in the vibrant cultural fabric of the programme.

In line with the university's mission to foster excellence through impact and care, the UBP provides students with opportunities to engage in intercultural activities and dialogues, enriching their academic and personal experiences.

Each year, the programme's launch adopts a specific theme to guide its activities. This year's focus was on showcasing students' vibrant sense of fashion, with participants dressing up in designer outfits for the occasion. The event, designed as a red-carpet affair, reflected the significance and grandeur of the occasion, with attendees dressing accordingly to honour the event's theme.

Second Umoja Buddy Programme (UBP) Training 2024

The UBP hosted a second training session for its ambassadors on 26 April 2024. The purpose of this training was to assist the participants in identifying their own personality traits, which would contribute to their ability to better navigate their academic and personal lives. This training, conducted virtually, was aligned with the UFS Vision 130 tenets of accountability and care, contributing to their global and intercultural education.

Meal In A Jar 2024

The Meal In A Jar (MIJ) project is an annual community engagement initiative designed to enrich the lives of communities around the UFS through the exchange of knowledge, sustenance, and skills development of the UFS student body and members of surrounding communities. Recognising the need for greater community engagement, the project has evolved into 'community culture', emphasising mutual learning, collaboration, and fostering a sense of belonging and inclusivity.

This year, the project centred on the evolution of architecture from traditional to modern designs in and around the Free State. Part of this initiative included a collaboration with the UFS Department of Architecture, which hosted students from Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, who visited the university on 25 May 2024 as part of an educational excursion to conduct research. The I@H portfolio supported the project by facilitating the visiting students' excursion to the Basotho Cultural Village, nestled between the Golden Gate Highlands National Park and Qwaqwa (Phuthaditjaba). This location was chosen for the preservation of traditional Basotho practices, such as cooking and architecture, making it an ideal site to learn about the Basotho people's heritage. As a popular tourist destination, it offers visitors the opportunity to explore and understand Basotho culture and lifestyle.



Chulalongkorn University students at the Basotho Cultural Village.



From the left: Prof Itumeleng Mosala, Adv Thando Gumede, Prof Francis Petersen, Dr Phethiwe Matutu, and Prof Vasu Reddy.

Annual Africa Day Celebration

The OIA commemorated its annual Africa Day Dialogue in line with the theme *World Citizenship and African Higher Education: Preparing Students for a Connected World* at the Centenary Complex on the UFS Bloemfontein Campus on 22 May 2024.

The event was graced by esteemed speakers with vast expertise, who discussed critical issues affecting the progress of African society and higher education. The panel included Advocate Thando Gumede, Prof Vasu Reddy, Prof Itumeleng Mosala, and Dr Phethiwe Matutu, with the robust discussion facilitated by the UFS Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Francis Petersen. The discussion encompassed topics on the role of leadership in shaping a university with a global mindset, with a dedicated focus on achieving gender parity in academic leadership; examining the influence of religion within African institutions of higher learning in the context of globalisation; implications for epistemic diversity, promotion of social justice, and inclusive leadership. These focus areas sought to promote social justice through global engagement, addressing strategies to bridge socio-economic disparities in education, and how we as an institution of higher education can improve self-awareness on a world stage and promote epistemic diversity in global citizenship education. With a vibrant student audience and artistic performances by the UFS Choir, the event created space for artistic expression and celebration of the day. Key recommendations included addressing colonial legacies and promoting social justice through higher education. The event underscored the UFS' commitment to fostering global citizenship and driving societal transformation.



Buddies and Ambassadors of the UBP spreading the spirit of friendship all over the Bloemfontein Campus.

Commemoration of International Friendship Day

On 30 July 2024, the Umoja Buddy Programme held its annual celebration of the globally celebrated 'International Friendship Day'. As in previous years, the ambassadors of the programme put together messages of friendship and attached these to gifts that were handed out to students and staff members on the UFS Bloemfontein Campus. The messages were intended to spread the spirit of friendship across the campus. The recipients of gifts were requested to share their sentiments about friendship through a series of questions captured on camera. Overall, this year's celebration was more impactful, with the social media approach taken to increase awareness and visibility of the day.

King Mzilikazi kaMashobane – Book Launch

The Office for International Affairs had the privilege of curating the book launch of the great King Mzilikazi kaMashobane on the Bloemfontein and Qwaqwa campuses on 19 and 26 September 2024, respectively. This book launch was a collaborative effort between the OIA, the SASOL Library, the departments of Social Work and History, and the Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice. The book showcased the life of the great king from his childhood, introduction to leadership, and his ultimate death.



The King Mzilikazi kaMashobane book launch in session.



Colleagues from the University of Bremen together with the UFS delegation.

Multi-European Institutional Visitations: The University of Bremen

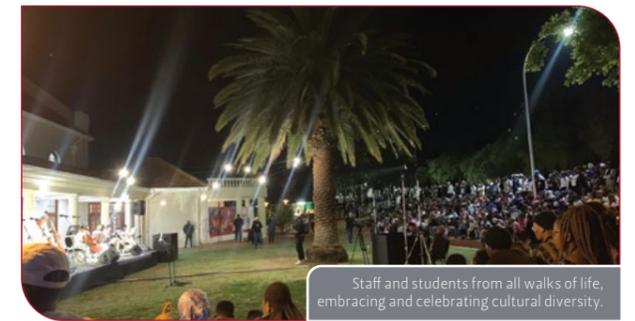
In early September, the OIA Internationalisation @ Home portfolio, in collaboration with the International Partnerships portfolio, travelled to Europe for a series of stakeholder engagements with partnering institutions. The first visit was to the University of Bremen, which took place from 9 to 10 September 2024, focusing on strengthening collaborations to create more inclusive and impactful opportunities for students from both institutions. The discussions resulted in several key initiatives aimed at fostering academic exchange, entrepreneurial growth, and cultural understanding. These included plans to increase incoming exchange students from the University of Bremen to the UFS, thereby enhancing cultural exchange and providing a richer academic experience for participants from both institutions. Two new programmes were introduced to further support this partnership. The first was the PRAXIS Virtual Exchange Summer Camp, a three- to four-week initiative designed to support UFS students who face financial or logistical barriers to travelling abroad by engaging them in solving real-world company challenges, equipping them with practical skills, and fostering international collaboration. The second was a six-month Basic Language Training Programme, recognising the importance of cultural integration by equipping UFS students with German language skills before their exchange opportunities, enabling them to adapt more effectively to the academic and cultural environment in Germany. In addition, the delegation explored the introduction of virtual start-up weekends, which will offer students from both institutions a platform to collaborate on business ideas, exchange global best practices, and develop cross-cultural entrepreneurial skills. The visit reinforced the UFS' commitment to building a stronger partnership with the University of Bremen, ensuring that students benefit from meaningful opportunities for academic, cultural, and entrepreneurial growth while addressing barriers to participation.

Multi-European Institutional Visitations: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU)

Following the visit to the University of Bremen, the OIA delegation visited the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU) on 13 September 2024, focusing on advancing their collaborative efforts. The discussions yielded several strategic initiatives to enhance student and staff opportunities, while reinforcing a shared commitment to innovation and diversity. The engagement birthed a proposal to expand academic exchanges to increase the number of incoming exchange students at both institutions. This initiative will enrich cross-cultural learning and academic diversity. This was followed by an exploration of the reinstatement of the Diversity Colloquium proposed by the VU, a collaborative initiative previously undertaken by the University of California (UCLA), the VU, and the UFS. This platform will provide a space for dialogue on global diversity issues that foster academic and cultural discourse, which will take place in 2026. To promote entrepreneurial skills, the meeting explored the development of virtual global entrepreneurship training programmes. These sessions will enable students to engage in collaborative innovation and exchange global best practices. The delegation further explored opportunities for capacity building for staff exchanges and PhD studies. Lastly, to equip students with the skills to navigate diverse cultural environments, the meeting explored the development of an intercultural skills exchange programme. A pilot for this initiative is planned for 2026. This visit reinforced the UFS partnership with the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, paving the way for impactful academic, cultural, and entrepreneurial collaboration.



Colleagues from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam together with the UFS delegation.



Staff and students from all walks of life, embracing and celebrating cultural diversity.

International Cultural Diversity Festival 2024

The Office for International Affairs, in collaboration with the Department of Arts and Culture, hosted the International Cultural Diversity Festival (ICDF) on 4 October 2024 at the Centenary Complex on the Bloemfontein Campus. Running from 15:00 to 23:00, the event aimed to spread awareness of cultural inclusivity and unity among UFS students and staff, providing a platform to showcase cultural expressions through music, dance, food, art, and fashion. It also emphasised the university's role in fostering cross-cultural understanding and creating an inclusive environment where students from diverse backgrounds can engage, learn, and appreciate each other's heritage. Traditional dances, music, and theatre from various student groups – including Xhosa, Sotho, Pedi, and Tswana cultures – offered unique and immersive experiences for attendees.

Performances included Xhosa dances such as the Umzansi and Indlamu, with dancers in colourful attire captivating the audience through intricate footwork and energetic movements. The Sotho group presented the Pitsa, a graceful yet powerful dance celebrating community unity, while the Pedi dancers performed the Dipina, a rhythmic display of storytelling through movement. Accompanied by traditional instruments such as drums, these performances filled the evening with rhythm, colour, and energy that transported the audience into the heart of each culture.

Meticulously organised, the festival flowed seamlessly between performances. Koded Black – a student dance group – earned the prize for Best Cultural Association, recognising their dedication to preserving and sharing traditional cultural dances and art. The evening closed with a powerful performance by Nia Pearl, a nationally recognised Amapiano artist whose hit songs had the crowd on their feet.

The festival not only showcased the beauty of cultural diversity at the UFS, but also highlighted the importance of the arts in fostering cultural understanding and unity, leaving a lasting impression on all who attended. 🌍

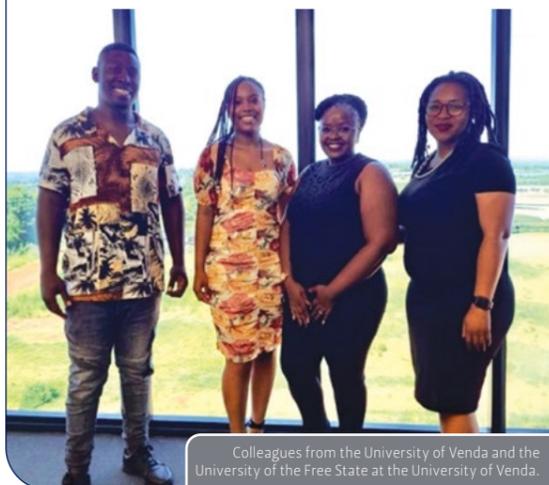


International Student Enrolment and Immigration

PORTFOLIO LEADERS:
Matladi Tsoeu and Jeanne Niemann

Benchmarking visit to the University of Venda

The Office for International Affairs' portfolio of International Enrolment Administration visited the University of Venda from 5 to 7 March 2024 to meet with the international student practitioner, Suzan Sathekge, and her colleagues from the Directorate of International Relations and Partnerships. The main objective of the visit was to engage with colleagues whose institutional context mirrors our own, particularly the Qwaqwa Campus, in line with the UFS multi-campus model, the administrative processes, and services available to international students.



Colleagues from the University of Venda and the University of the Free State at the University of Venda.



Matladi Tsoeu representing the OIA at the 2024 Annual Postgraduate Student Welcoming Function.

Postgraduate Student Welcoming Function

The Office for International Affairs was invited to address incoming postgraduate students at the 2024 Annual Postgraduate Welcoming Function, hosted by the Centre for Graduate Support (CGS) on 20 March 2024. This function was an opportunity to raise awareness about the services offered to postgraduate students by the OIA and CGS. It further raised awareness about the specialised administrative support offered not only to international students, but to the whole UFS student and staff community.

International Conference for Education and Fairs (ICEF) Africa

In addition to 25 ICEF-accredited recruiting agents from across the continent, the ICEF Africa conference, held from 2 to 5 July in Kigali, Rwanda, brought together international educators and representatives from various universities. The main objective was to promote partnerships and opportunities in the field of global education. The conference provided a dedicated space for showcasing top African universities and a platform for networking, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas.

The UFS as a participating institution delegated Matladi Tsoeu and Letlela Tshabalala to represent not only the Office for International Affairs, but the University of the Free State at large.



Matladi Tsoeu (centre) and Letlela Tshabalala (right).

Universities South Africa (USAf) Regulations Workshop

The International Enrolment Administration portfolio hosted Clayton Lesufi and Godirile Mahatlane from Universities South Africa (USAf) on 19 September 2024 for an exemption regulations training and workshop on the UFS Bloemfontein Campus. In attendance were colleagues from the UFS Student Academic Services (Admissions officers and the Student Contact Centre) as well as various faculty representatives from the faculties of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, Health Sciences, The Humanities, and Economic and Management Sciences. This proved to be an immensely fruitful engagement, as USAf gave a thorough presentation on exemption procedures, minimum admission requirements, and approved certification, among other objectives.



Colleagues from Universities South Africa, and representatives of various UFS departments and faculties.

Momentum and CompCare Medical Aid Schemes

In September and October, the Student Administration and Immigration portfolio conducted a questionnaire to identify the challenges that international students and international postdoctoral research fellows encounter with their medical aid schemes. After analysing this data, information sessions were organised for UFS international students and postdoctoral fellows to gain a plethora of insights regarding their medical aid plans. These sessions not only helped the portfolio strengthen its relations with CompCare and Momentum medical aid schemes, but it also aided in building rapport with students.



Colleagues from the UFS Office for International Affairs (OIA) at the University of Venda engaging with Chinese stakeholders.



Study visa realities in South Africa: An explorative study

Following a report submitted in the last quarter of 2023 regarding visa-related challenges, the International Student Administration portfolio conducted research as part of an explorative study to document these challenges in 2024. This involved site visits to the University of Zululand and the University of Venda for several engagements and interviews.

The visit to the University of Venda took place from 5 to 7 March. Among those interviewed were students from various countries, including China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the United States of America, Kenya, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and Belgium. The conversations with the students aimed to pave the way for generating dense data, which will assist in the explorative study.

The team visited the University of Zululand on 18 March, which bore comparatively little fruit for the team's research paper, as they only managed to secure two interviewees, despite several attempts to secure telephonic interviews. Despite all these hurdles, the portfolio still proceeded with the explorative study, intending to complete its first draft by the end of April 2024. 🌱



Study Abroad Scholarships and Marketing

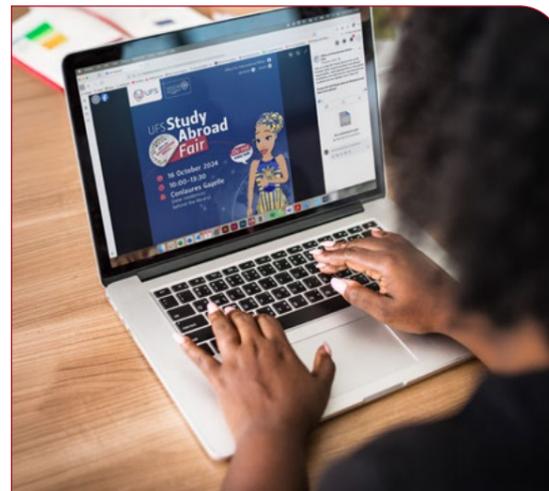
PORTFOLIO LEADER:
Mbali Moiketsi

CSRC International Presents Exam Prep Workshop

The Campus Student Representative Council (CSRC) office-bearer for the portfolio of International Student Council (UFS), Constance Banda, hosted an insightful exam preparation workshop on 16 May 2024, aimed at empowering international students with the tools and strategies needed to excel in their academic pursuits. The workshop, held in the Equitas Senate Hall, saw enthusiastic participation from students hailing from a diverse range of countries, all eager to maximise their potential and enhance their readiness for study abroad opportunities.

The workshop included effective study techniques, time management skills, stress management strategies, and insights into the various examination formats commonly encountered in international education systems. Students were also provided with practical tips on how to approach different types of exam questions, from multiple-choice to essay-based assessments. The interactive nature of the workshop allowed students to engage in group discussions, share their experiences, and learn from one another.

In addition to academic preparation, the OIA – represented by Mbali Moiketsi – was invited to address the broader aspects of studying abroad, such as cultural adaptation and building a support network in a new country. These sessions aimed to provide a holistic approach to exam preparation, ensuring that students are not only academically ready, but also emotionally and socially equipped for their international academic journey.



Virtual Study Abroad Fair

On 8 and 9 May 2024, the Virtual Scholarship Fair, hosted by the OIA, provided an engaging and dynamic platform for students to explore a wide range of scholarship opportunities and connect with educational institutions and sponsors. Hosted virtually, the fair aimed to bridge the gap between aspiring scholars and available funding sources, fostering inclusivity and accessibility.

The fair featured an impressive array of presentations tailored to meet the diverse needs and interests of attendees. Esteemed organisations such as DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), SANORD (South African-Nordic Centre), DHET (Department of Higher Education and Training), and Campus China conducted and coordinated these informative sessions. Attendance was exceptional on both days, highlighting the event's success and relevance.

Key highlights of the Virtual Scholarship Fair included the opportunity for attendees to interact directly with representatives, obtain vital information, and ask questions about available scholarships and educational opportunities. The success of the fair underscores the importance of such initiatives in making educational funding accessible to a broader audience. By providing a platform for direct engagement and comprehensive information, the fair has significantly contributed to helping students achieve their academic and professional aspirations.

Ibali Stakeholder Workshop

The OIA portfolio for International Scholarships, Marketing, and Web Content participated in the Ibali Stakeholder Workshop on 10 May 2024, contributing significantly to the panel discussion on inclusion challenges and strategies. The workshop focused on fostering inclusion in various societal sectors, providing a platform for experts and community leaders to discuss and propose solutions.

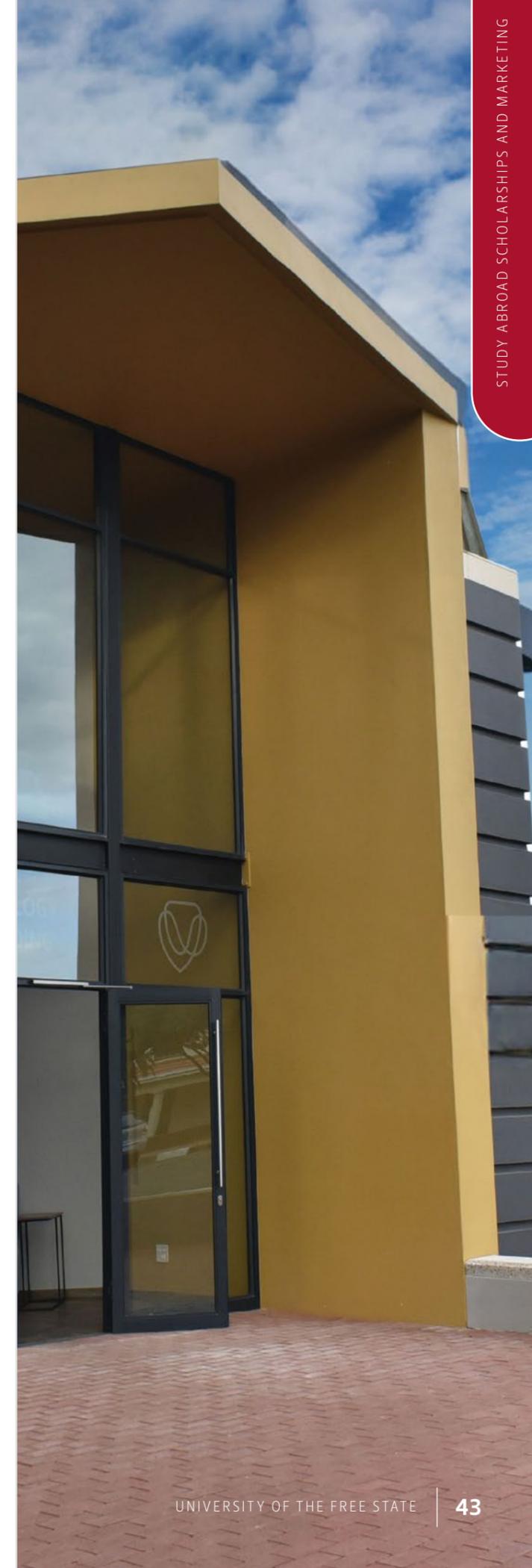
Key challenges regarding inclusion in South Africa were highlighted, particularly within the educational sector. The discussions included current priorities, future concerns, and efforts to address these potential future threats/concerns. Group discussions emphasised hurdles in implementing inclusive education practices and proposed practical, context-specific solutions.

Them bani Hoho from the OIA and a panellist discussed inclusivity in education from an international perspective and addressed the inclusion of international students in higher education. The panel facilitated a rich exchange of ideas, best practices, and collaborative approaches to fostering inclusive societies.

The interactive discussion highlighted the complexity of inclusion issues and the need for continued advocacy and action, underscoring the value of dialogue and collaboration in addressing societal challenges and promoting inclusion.

Study Abroad Scholarship Fair

The OIA hosted its annual Study Abroad Fair on Wednesday 16 October 2024 on its Bloemfontein Campus. The annual event was designed to connect students with international opportunities and broaden their academic horizons. The fair brought together key international partners, including the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Fulbright US Student Programme, the Southern African-Nordic Centre (SANORD), Campus France, and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), to showcase a variety of study, research, and exchange programmes open to UFS students and staff. The event, which took place at the Conlaurès Gazelle, attracted a large turnout of students and staff eager to explore opportunities to study and conduct research abroad. 🇨🇵





4 FACULTY REPORTS

FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES



Dean
Prof Philippe Burger



Faculty Internationalisation
Coordinator
Dr Reabetswe Parkies



INCOMING AND OUTGOING INTERNATIONAL STAFF EXCHANGES

This category showcases activities relating to incoming international staff hosted; outgoing international staff exchange other than conference and workshop attendance.

Department of Economics and Finance

Prof Johan Coetzee visits the Schmalkalden University of Applied Sciences

Prof Johan Coetzee (Chairperson of the Department of Economics and Finance) visited the Schmalkalden University of Applied Sciences in Germany from 30 to 31 May 2024 to investigate collaboration opportunities. From this, four undergraduate students from the Department of Economics and Finance, specialising in either 1) Finance or 2) Business and Financial Analytics, spent five months in the second semester of 2024 (October 2024 to February 2025) at the Schmalkalden University of Applied Sciences in Germany on an Erasmus-funded student exchange programme. All four of these students are expected to complete their honours degrees at the UFS in 2025.

Dr Celeste Campher to lecture at the University of Bremen Summer School, Germany

Following the visit of **Prof Johan Coetzee** to the University of Bremen from 14 to 15 May 2024, **Dr Celeste Campher** will lecture at the Summer School presented by the University of Bremen in Germany from 26 May to 11 July 2025. The two universities are considering the development of a joint master's degree in Economics that will be in development in 2025.

Prof Johan Coetzee reunites with a former guest lecturer at the UFS in 2019, **Dr Mohamad Ramady**

Prof Johan Coetzee met up with Dr Mohamed Ramady in downtown London in May 2024. Dr Ramady visited the Department of Economics and Finance as a guest lecturer in 2019. He is a world-renowned Gulf economist with extensive experience in academia (Professor of Banking at the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in Saudi Arabia) and as vice-president of banks, including Citibank and Chase Manhattan Bank. The purpose and primary aim of this visit was to build relations in conjunction with Prof Coetzee's lectures in Fulda and Austria.

Office of the Vice-Dean: Research, Engagement and Internationalisation

Prof Brownhilder Neneh continued collaborations after the completion of the 2023 Erasmus mobility programme

After participating in the 2023 Erasmus mobility programme, some master's students had the opportunity to visit the UFS Business School. In addition, **Prof Neneh** actively collaborated with the Dean of Student Affairs, who also contributed by writing the foreword for a book titled, *Craft Your Win: A Woman's Guide to Creating Ideal Work-Life Balance* by **Prof Neneh**.

Prof Neneh is to attend the Academy of Management Conference in 2025, where she will reconnect with colleagues who hosted her for a class presentation in 2023. Future prospects of this collaboration include the possibility of a joint project focusing on co-working spaces.

Prof Neneh was further ranked among the top 2% most cited scientists in 2024 in the Stanford Elsevier list, alongside **Prof Melanie Walker** and **Prof John Owen**.

School of Accountancy

Prof Frans Prinsloo and Ané Church visit institutions in England in the second semester of 2024

Prof Frans Prinsloo and **Ané Church** visited several universities in the United Kingdom from 28 October to 1 November 2024, including Coventry University, the University of Manchester, and the University of Exeter. At the University of Exeter, they presented a

lecture on: *Unpacking the Steinhoff Scandal: Lessons in Corporate Governance*. During their visit, they also took the top five students from the Postgraduate Chartered Accountancy (PGCA) programme to participate in the International Audit Week, hosted by Coventry University in Kenilworth and Stratford-upon-Avon, England. The students' visit was made possible by the generous sponsorship of the Raubex Group, RAiN Chartered Accountants, the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA), the Core Group, and Interstate Bus Lines. The UFS students performed exceptionally well during the International Audit Week, where they had to work on auditing case studies and make presentations together with students from universities in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and England. This initiative not only opened up the world to these students, who have never been abroad before, but also developed their intercultural competence, along with many graduate attributes. After the International Audit Week, the students also had the opportunity to explore the streets of London, where they visited Wimbledon Stadium, Buckingham Palace, the Tower of London, and many more.

Centre for Development Support

Visit to the University of Zambia and University of Malawi

Dr Mikateko Mathebula and **Dr Faith Mkwanzani** visited the University of Zambia (January 2024). The researchers met with the HoDs of the Department of Education, as well as the deans and DVCs.

Department of Industrial Psychology

Lyle Markham attends an online meeting with Prof Berkoh Damoah (University of Ghana Business School)

Lyle Markham attended an online meeting with **Prof Berkoh Damoah** from the Department of Organisation and Human Resource Management at the University of Ghana Business School to discuss potential areas of collaboration in teaching, research, and lecturer mobility opportunities. Furthermore, he attended the International Human Resource Conference (HRIC 2023), held in Sun City, South Africa, from 30 May to 4 June. During this conference, he networked with various stakeholders, particularly from France, Germany, England, and the Netherlands, to explore opportunities for collaborations.

The department also co-hosted **Prof Peter Rosseel** from KU Leuven (Belgium), who presented several guest lectures to both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Department of Public Administration and Management

Members of the Department of Public Administration and Management participated in the following international incoming and outgoing exchange activities:

- **Dr Lyndon du Plessis** served as chairperson of the keynote speeches session at the opening ceremony of the 2024 annual conference of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration.
- The Department of Public Administration and Management hosted the 2024 annual International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration Conference, which was attended by approximately 200 international and local delegates on the Bloemfontein Campus of the University of the Free State.
- **Prof Liezel Lues** was invited to present the international standard of Public Administration at the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) of the United Nations DESA/IASIA Global Task Force: Towards New Standards of Excellence in Public Administration Education and Training in New York, United States, from 14 to 15 October 2024. **Prof Liezel Lues** was also elected as Vice-President representing Africa in the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration from 2024 to 2027. Lastly, Prof Liezel Lues served as rapporteur of the 2024 annual conference of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration.
- **Dr Maréve Biljohn** and **Prof Liezel Lues** served as members of the Organising Committee of the 2024 annual conference of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration. **Dr Maréve Biljohn**, **Dr Constance Motsitsi**, **Prof Liezel Lues**, **Dr Lyndon du Plessis**, **Dr Tafadzwa Maramura**, **Dr Ambrose du Plessis**, **Peter Molekane**, **Dr Nkosingiphile Mkhize**, **Mary Masiloane**, **David Modirapula**, **Lehlohonolo Malope**, **Oratilwe Khoza**, **Mosa Mofokeng**, and **Ndumiso Mbuthuma** served as members of the Local Organising Committee of the 2024 annual conference of the International Association

of Schools and Institutes of Administration. Lastly, **Dr Maréve Biljohn** served as Chairperson of the working group on the conference theme, Alternative Service Delivery and Sustainable Societal Responsiveness, for the 2024 annual conference of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration hosted on the Bloemfontein Campus of the University of the Free State.

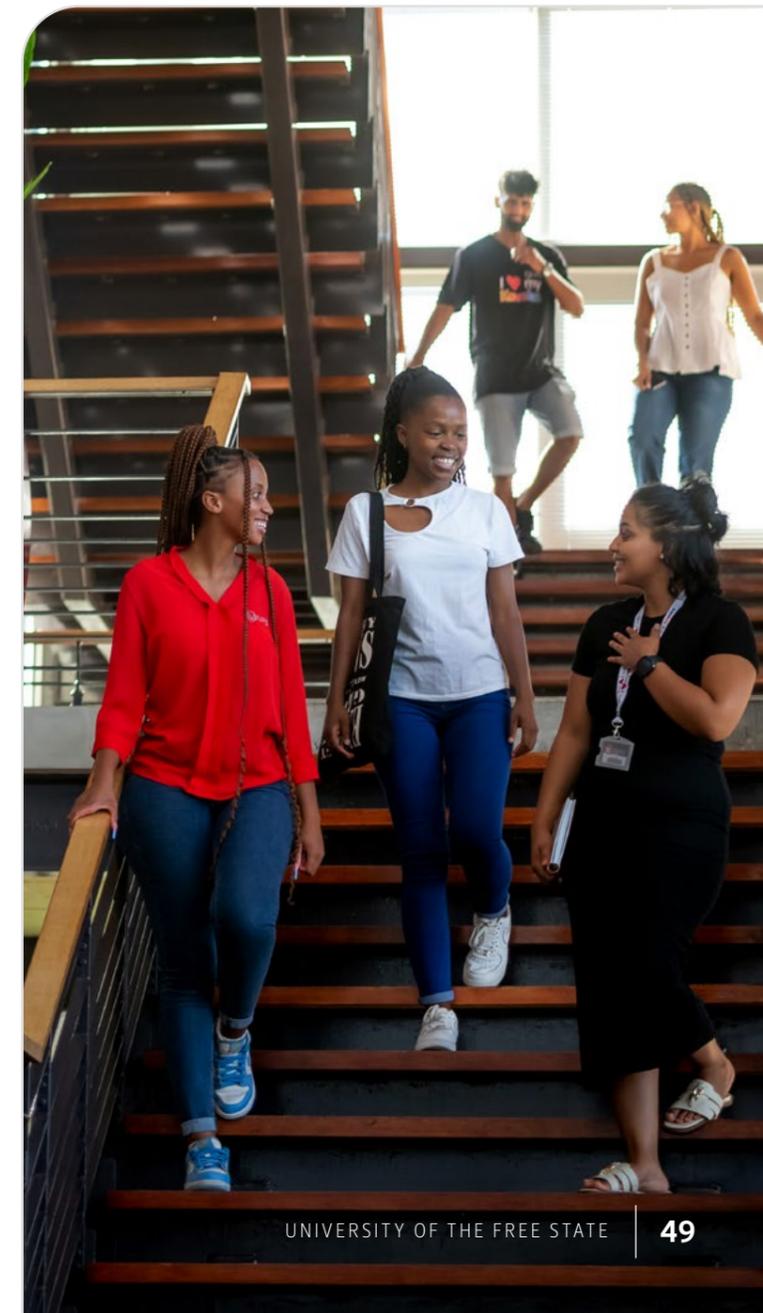
- **Dr Tafadzwa Maramura**, **Dr Ambrose du Plessis**, **Dr Maréve Biljohn**, and **Prof Liezel Lues** presented papers at the 2024 annual European Group of Public Administration Conference in Greece.
- **Dr Constance Motsitsi** and **Dr Maréve Biljohn** presented papers at the 2024 annual International Institute of Administrative Sciences Conference in Mombasa, Kenya.
- **Dr Maréve Biljohn**, **Dr Constance Motsitsi**, **Prof Liezel**, **Dr Lyndon du Plessis**, **Dr Tafadzwa Maramura**, **Dr Ambrose du Plessis**, **Dr Nkosingiphile Mkhize**, **Mary Masiloane**, **David Modirapula**, **Lehlohonolo Malope**, **David Modirapula**, **Lehlohonolo Malope**, and **Oratilwe Khoza** presented papers at the 2024 annual conference of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration.
- **Dr Maréve Biljohn** served as Chairperson of Working Group 12 – Collaborative Governance Conditions, Challenges and Successes: International perspectives on co-production for public service delivery at the 2024 annual International Institute of Administrative Sciences Conference.
- **Dr Tafadzwa Maramura** served as Co-Chairperson of the session titled Financing Water Access and Security at the Seventh Annual International Water Association (IWA) Water and Development Congress 2024. He also presented a paper at this congress. Lastly, **Dr Maramura** was appointed Secretary for the Institutional Governance and Regulation Specialist Group of the International Water Association on 20 February 2024.
- **Dr Maréve Biljohn** served as a panellist for Alternative Service Delivery and Sustainable Societal Responsiveness at the annual International Institute of Administrative Sciences Conference hosted in Mumbai, India, on 29 February 2024.
- **Prof Liezel Lues** continued to serve as a board member of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration for the term 2022 to 2025. Prof Lues also served

on the Steering Committee of the International Commission on the Accreditation of Public Administration and Training Programmes (ICAPA-SC) of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration from 2022 to 2025.

UFS Business School

Business School appoints international academics

The Business School appointed the following internationally recognised academics during 2024/5: **Prof Dr Arnold Bakker** (citations – 336019; h-index – 222; i-10 index – 638); **Prof Dr Evangelica Demerouti** (citations – 153935; h-index – 130; i-10 index – 272); **Prof Dr Beatrice van der Heijden** (citations – 28258; h-index – 84; i-10 index – 266); **Prof Dr Lidewey van der Sluis**; **Prof Dr Bernd Hacker**; **Prof Dr Stephan Hornig**; **Prof Jim Devlin**.



INTERNATIONALISATION OF LEARNING AND TEACHING, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

This category is concerned with new collaborative degrees, virtual exchanges including COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning), student incoming and outgoing exchanges, and other significant developments relating to internationalisation of learning and teaching.

Department of Economics and Finance

UFS staff members deliver virtual and in-person lectures at various European universities

Several staff members, including **Dr Edson Vengesai** (Fulda University of Applied Sciences, in person: April-July 2024; Schmalkalden University of Applied Sciences, online: May-June 2024), **Dr Arno van Niekerk** (in-person: Salzburg University of Applied Sciences, April 2024), **Prof Johan Coetzee** (in-person: Fulda University of Applied Sciences, April-June 2024; in-person: Salzburg University of Applied Sciences, June-July 2024 and December 2024; Schmalkalden University of Applied Sciences, online: December 2024), and Dr Ivan van der Merwe (Salzburg University of Applied Sciences, June 2024), lectured courses both online and in person in 2024. **Prof Johan Coetzee** and **Dr Edson Vengesai** taught at the Fulda University of Applied Sciences (FUAS) from April to July 2024. These activities were part of continuing Erasmus teaching mobilities between

FUAS and SUAS over many years. The Schmalkalden University of Applied Sciences is a new partnership we are working on.

School of Accountancy

UFS School of Accountancy participates in a COIL project

In the School of Accountancy, the BAccounting third-year, BCom Honours (Accounting), and Postgraduate Diploma in General Accountancy students engaged in a COIL project with students from Coventry University, where they had to work together on a project in their Auditing module during September 2024. Using a case study, the UFS students guided the Coventry University students on the factors to consider when accepting an audit client and how to perform risk assessments procedures when planning the audit. The UFS students played the part of audit partners, while the Coventry students played the part of audit trainees. This developed students' leadership skills, digital skills (by making use of online meeting tools, also learning about different time zones), and intercultural competence. Students also reported improved technical skills as they learned through teaching others.

Training presentation to the Namibia Institute of Professional Accountants

Charlotte Malan presented training to the members of the Namibia Institute of Professional Accountants.

This included a three-part series on relevant IFRS Accounting Standards and was presented virtually in August and October 2024.

Guest speakers at the Southern Africa Association of Accountants Annual Conference

Ané Church was a guest speaker at the 2024 Southern Africa Association of Accountants Annual Conference in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, held from 29 June to 2 July 2024. Her presentation was titled *Ethics – Cornerstone of the accounting profession*.

Ané Church attended the Female Voices in COIL conference and the iKudu engagements that followed, hosted at Coventry University, England, from 18 to 20 March 2024. She also gave a presentation at the conference, titled *Enhancing Skills Development through COIL*.

Department of Public Administration and Management

Lectures delivered by international guest lecturers in the Department of Public Administration and Management

Evas Kemigisha and **Mansur Bello** from Ghent University in Belgium presented guest lectures in the BAdmin Honours and PGDip Programme of the Department of Public Administration and Management in the first and second semesters of 2024.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

This category entails newly signed memorandums of understanding/agreements (MoUs and MoAs) in conjunction with staff and student mobility agreements, opportunities, but not limited to joint degrees.

Department of Economics and Finance

UFS establishes a consecutive master's degree in international finance

The Department of Economics and Finance has established a consecutive master's degree in International Finance with the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences (SUAS) in Austria. This degree was established in 2022, with the outcome being two master's degrees: 1) A master's in Finance at the UFS and 2) a Master of Arts in Business (with specialisation in Financial Risk Management) at SUAS. The students attend SUAS for a full year, with

the first UFS students attending SUAS in 2023. To date, six postgraduate UFS students have attended and four are expected to complete their master's at SUAS by the end of 2025, with three of the six having already completed their UFS master's and the remaining three expected to complete their UFS master's at the end of 2026.

UFS exploring possibilities for developing a trading floor for its postgraduate Finance students

Based on visits by **Dr Frans Prinsloo** and **Ané Church** to Coventry University in 2024, the Department of Economics and Finance will be visiting Coventry University in the UK in 2025 to investigate the possibility of developing a trading floor for our postgraduate Finance students.

Economics and finance students study abroad in Germany

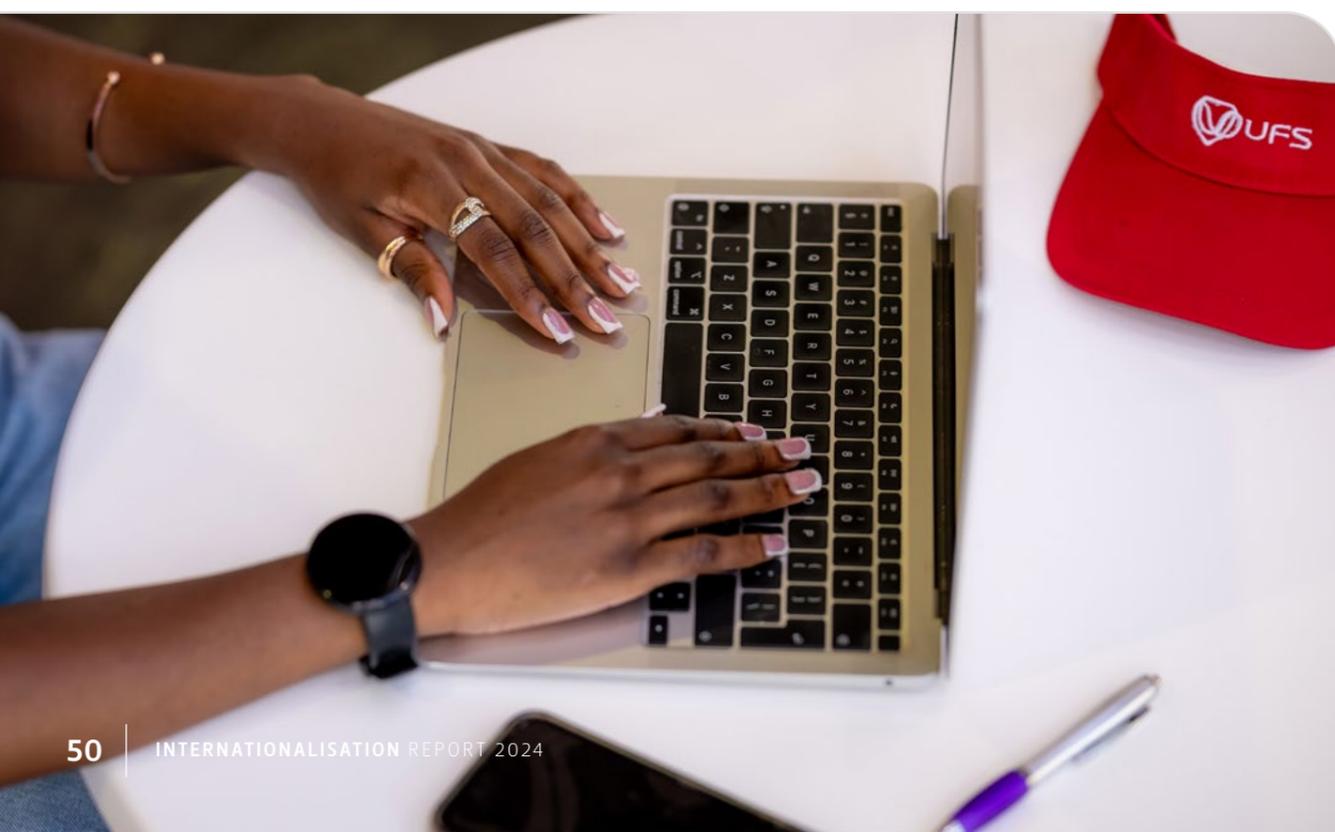
Four undergraduate students from the Department of Economics and Finance, specialising in either 1) Finance or 2) Business and Financial Analytics, spent five months in the second semester of 2024 at the Schmalkalden University of Applied Sciences in Germany on an Erasmus-funded student exchange programme.

Centre for Development Support

Internationally funded projects awarded to Prof Lochner Marais are as follows:

Prof Marais has internationally funded projects with the following entities:

1. National Institute of Health (Mental Health) (USA), (2022-2027): R20 million – The acceptability and feasibility of an adaptation of the Mediation Intervention of Sensitising Caregivers (MISC) for community-based organisations in a sample of South African HIV/Aids orphans. (UFS share: R10 m) (co-principal investigator).
2. 2024: R250 000 – Redesigning the sex education manual for LoveLife (funded by Purdue University).
3. PANEX via the NRF (2022-2024) – COVID and children (collaborator).
4. Australian Research Council (PI Kemp and Owen), 2021-2024: R16 m – Industrial disasters, disclosure deficits: Can transparency level the playing field? (collaborator) – Main contribution: leading work on the Jagersfontein tailing failure. 🌍



FACULTY OF EDUCATION



Dean
Prof Loyiso Jita



Faculty Internationalisation
Coordinator
Dr Sekanse Ntsala



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH, PUBLICATIONS AND COLLABORATIONS

This category encompasses all activities related to international research, including conference attendances, conference presentations, hosting of international guests for research and academic purposes, and international academic collaborations.

Department of Language Education

Department hosts collaborators from the United Kingdom and Belgium

The department hosted guests from Coventry University in the United Kingdom (UK) and the University of Antwerp (Belgium) on 6 May 2024, to finalise the logistics and planning for a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), which is to take place in February 2025.

Department of Education Management, Policy, and Comparative Education

Drs Desiree Larey and Patrick Mweli's collaboration: paper presentation

Drs Desiree Larey and Patrick Mweli collaborated to present a paper titled 'African knowledge and Eurocentric knowledge systems within the South African curriculum' at a research roundtable themed/ titled *Diasporas of Justice: Rethinking Knowledge Systems to Challenge Power*. This was held at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association 2024 (AERA2024), which took place from 11 to 14 April 2024 in Philadelphia, USA.

Prof Onoriode Potokri's participation in the Education Management Conference

Conference presentation by Prof Onoriode Potokri: Potokri, OC. (4-7 June 2024). *Leading and managing education digitalisation in the 21st Century*. Keynote address at the Educational Management International

Conference, held at the Presbyterian University of East Africa, Nairobi, Kenya.

Prof Thuthukile Jita participated in the following international research, publication, and collaboration activities:

- **Prof Thuthukile Jita** presented a paper at the 97th National Association for Research in Science Teaching (NARST) Annual Conference 2024. The theme of the conference was *Science Education for the Rest of Us*, and the title of the paper was 'Preservice teachers' level of knowledge on elements and rationale for nature of instruction'. This conference was held from 17 to 20 March 2024 in Denver, Colorado, United States of America.
- **Prof Jita** also presented a paper at the 32nd Conference of the Southern African Association for Research in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education. The overall theme of the conference was *Rethinking relevant research in mathematics, science and technology education for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)*. The title of the presented paper was 'Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy: choice and implication for science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields'. The activity took place in Windhoek, Namibia, from 16 to 18 January 2024.

Department of Curriculum Studies and Higher Education

Prof Loyiso Jita and Dr Godsend Chimbi's collaboration on a research presentation

The abovementioned collaborated on the presentation of their research on *Protecting jobs and lives: teachers' passive resistance and subtle protest to curriculum policy*. This presentation took place at the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) conference, held in Miami, Florida, from 10 to 14 March 2024.

Prof Loyiso Jita and Dr David Letloenyane collaborated on the following:

Prof Loyiso Jita and Dr David Letloenyane attended and presented a paper titled *Effects of opportunities to learn on pre-service science teacher knowledge and beliefs* at the National Association for Research in Science Teaching (NARST) Conference, which took place in Denver Colorado, United States of America, from 17 to 20 March 2024.

INCOMING AND OUTGOING INTERNATIONAL STAFF EXCHANGES

This category showcases activities relating to

incoming international staff hosted; outgoing international staff exchange other than conference and workshop attendance.

Department of Curriculum Studies and Higher Education

Prof Thuthukile Jita's participation in the 12th ECE in London, England

Prof Thuthukile Jita attended the 12th European Conference on Education (ECE), which took place in London from 11 to 15 July 2024. The conference was held in partnership with Birkbeck College, University of London. The title of the paper/presentation was *Attitudinal predispositions of first-year preservice teachers to technology integration in pedagogy*.

Prof Loyiso Jita and Prof Thuthukile Jita collaborated on the following internationalisation activities:

Prof Loyiso Jita and Prof Thuthukile Jita presented a paper titled *Preservice teachers' work integrated learning perspectives of mobile devices in learning to teach science: a case study of Southern African countries*. This presentation was delivered at the XVIII (18th) World Congress of Comparative Education Societies 2024 Congress (WCCES) at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, USA, which took place from 22 to 26 July 2024.

Paper presentation at international conferences by Dr Lulama Mdozana-Zide

Dr Lulama Mdozana-Zide presented a paper titled *School libraries as innovative pedagogical hubs in rural South Africa: a six-school case study* at the XVIII World Congress of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) Conference in Ithaca, New York, held between 22 and 26 July 2024.

In 2024, Prof Chinedu Okeke, Dr Lintle Maraisane, Dr Blandina Manditereza, and Patience Khantsi participated in the below outgoing international staff exchange activity:

Prof Chinedu Okeke, Dr Lintle Maraisane, Dr Blandina Manditereza, and Patience Khantsi presented a paper at the University of Eswatini International Conference on Education, held from 6 to 9 August 2024. Title of paper – *Strategies utilised by practitioners to enhance the active participation of parents in mobile ECCE services*.

Drs Lulama Mdozana-Zide, Ntombizandile Gcelu, and Zukiswa Nhase

The abovementioned individuals formed part of a panel of presenters on the topic *Establishing*

sustainable school libraries in rural schools – challenges and opportunities: one donation at a time. This panel presentation was delivered at the BERA-WERA conference at the University of Manchester, UK, which took place from 8 to 14 September 2024.

Department of Childhood Education

Dr Lintle Maraisane participated in the following internationalisation activity:

Dr Lintle Maraisane presented a paper titled *Bridging gaps in early childhood science education: exploring the role of science process skills in teaching floating and sinking concepts in Grade R*. This was at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) World Education Research Association (WERA) held at the University of Manchester, England, from 8 to 12 September 2024.

Prof Chinedu Okeke, Dr Zukiswa Nhase, and Mmakgabo Selepe collaborated on the following paper presentation:

The abovementioned individuals collaborated to present a paper titled *How mobile early childhood care education (ECCE) practitioners leverage a variety of learning materials in resource-scarce communities* at the Third University of Eswatini (UNESWA) International Conference on Education (UICE2024), held at the University of Eswatini from 6 to 8 August 2024.

Prof Chinedu Okeke, Dr Zukiswa Nhase, and Dr Lintle Maraisane collaborated on the following paper presentation:

The abovementioned individuals collaborated to present a paper titled *Mobile practitioners' experiences regarding health and nutrition as a synergy for optimising early childhood care education services in rural communities* at the Third UNESWA International Conference on Education (UICE2024) held from 6 to 8 August 2024.

Dr Zukile Nhase delivered the following paper at the 18th WCCES:

Dr Zukile Nhase presented a paper titled *Fostering basic scientific skills: innovative pedagogies in childhood education classrooms* at the XVIII World Congress of Comparative Education Societies International Conference on Fostering Inclusive Ecologies of Knowledge: Education for Equitable and Sustainable Futures (WCCES2024), held from 22 to 26 July 2024 at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, USA.

Office of the Vice-Dean: Research, Engagement and Internationalisation

Prof Matseliso Mokhele-Makgalwa participated in the following internationalisation activity:

Prof Matseliso Mokhele-Makgalwa presented a paper titled *Teachers' experiences on the teaching of science to learners with hearing impairment in Lesotho secondary schools* at the XVIII World Congress of Comparative Education Societies 2024 Congress (WCCES) at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, USA, which took place from 22 to 26 July 2024.

Department of Education Foundations

Dr Henry Nichols participated in the following international mobility activity:

Dr Nichols presented a paper at the Fourth International Conference on Gender Studies and Sexuality in Berlin, Germany, held from 14 to 16 March 2024. The paper was titled *Exploring the influence of queer celebrities on shaping school youths' perspectives on gender and sexual diversity*.

Dr Charity Okeke presented the following international papers:

- Presented a paper titled *Professional conversation: an informal mentoring tool for in-service teachers* at the 31st International Conference on Learning, which took place between 10 and 12 July 2024 at Utrecht University, Utrecht, the Netherlands.
- Presented a paper titled *The role of professional conversation in the learning community* at the XVIII World Congress of Comparative Education Societies, which took place from 22 to 26 July 2024 at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA.

Department of Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Technology Education

Prof Zanele Ngcobo, Dr Jyoti Jhagroo, Dr Msebenzi Rabaza, and Dr Justice Enu collaborated on the below international paper presentation:

Prof Zanele Ngcobo (University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa), **Dr Jyoti Jhagroo** (Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand), **Dr Msebenzi Rabaza** (University of the Free State, South Africa), and **Dr Justice Enu** (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana) presented a paper at the 47th Annual Meeting of the International Group for the Psychology of Mathematics Education (PME 47), which took place from 17 to 21 July 2024 in Auckland, New Zealand. The title of the paper was *Mathematics teacher educators' perspectives on their preparedness for online teaching*.

Department of Language Education

Dr Sekanse Ntsala's paper presentation at the Ninth International Conference on Advanced Research in Education, Teaching and Learning

Dr Sekanse Ntsala presented a paper at the Ninth International Conference on Advanced Research in Education, Teaching, and Learning (6–9 December 2024) held in Paris. The title of the paper was *Impediments to integration of ICT in Free State language primary schools*.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

This category entails newly signed memoranda of understanding/agreement (MoUs and MoAs) in conjunction with staff and student mobility agreements, opportunities, but not limited to joint degrees.

Department of Childhood Education

Dr Zukiswa Nhase was involved in the following international partnership activity:

Dr Zukiswa Nhase was in her second year as a member of the research group *Researching Education in a Globalised World*. This group comprised academics and PhD students worldwide; they continued to meet every second month to support PhD students and provide feedback on any written or presented academic work. The group is led by **Prof Maren Seehawer** from the Norwegian School for Theology, Religion and Society. **Dr Zukiswa Nhase** collaborated with Gerard Guthrie, an independent researcher in New Zealand, on a publication that is currently under review.

FACULTY INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY

This section seeks to obtain information on the progress of the faculty in the implementation of its internationalisation strategy.

Department of Language Education

Dr Martha Khosa continued communication with the National University of Lesotho

Dr Khosa had communication with the heads of department in the Department of Languages within the Faculty of Education at the National University of Lesotho on 4 September 2024, regarding the promotion of collaborations between the two departments in the areas of research and teaching, and learning.

Dr Khosa also conducted research workshops for colleagues at NUL on 27–28 September 2024. 🌐



FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES



Dean
Prof Gert van Zyl



Faculty Internationalisation
Coordinator
Reuben Maeko

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH, PUBLICATIONS AND COLLABORATIONS

This category encompasses all activities related to international research, including conference attendances, conference presentations, hosting of international guests for research and academic purposes, and international academic collaborations.

Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery

Prof Carlos Mestres has been appointed to the following international advisory, research, and academic boards/organisations:

- Member of the Advisory Committee for the Aortic Programme of the Department of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery at the National University Hospital of Singapore from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2024.
- Executive Chief Editor of *Vessel Plus* (vpjournal.net - OAE Publishing, Inc.) from 23 August 2022 to 23 August 2024. ISSN 2574-1209 (online).
- Board member of The Asian Society for Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery (ASCVTS). 2022-2024.

Prof Francis Smit has participated in the following international research activities:

Prof Smit delivered a keynote address at the 2024 Heart Valve Society Annual Meeting, held in Boston, USA, from 16 to 23 February 2024.

Prof Carlos Mestres has been appointed as a member of following committees:

Member of the Advisory Committee for the Aortic Programme of the Department of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery at the National University Hospital of Singapore from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2024.

Prof Francis Smit has been appointed to the following international research committee:

Elected as a member of the Education Committee of EACTS, 29 May-3 June 2024.

Prof Francis Smit attended the following international conferences:

- 2024 Heart Valve Society Annual Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. 16-23 February 2024.
- The World Society of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgeons Conference. Barcelona, Spain, 3-8 September 2024.

Department of Clinical Medicine

Dr Claire Armour has delivered the following presentations at various international conferences:

- Minimisation of blood loss and optimisation of coagulation – Africa Society for Blood Transfusion (AfsBT) Congress, Kampala, Uganda, March 2024.
- Presented at the International Society of Blood Transfusion and Africa Society for Blood Transfusion (AfsBT), *Survey on the patient blood management in African countries – results*. This engagement was hosted by the AfsBT Congress in Kampala, Uganda.

Dr Claire Armour also serves on the following international committees, advisory boards, and editorial boards:

- Co-chair of the Global Transfusion Forum Education Subcommittee
- Member of the EXCO of the Global Transfusion Forum
- Member of the Research subcommittee of the Global Transfusion Forum
- Member of the Global Standards Committee of the Association for the Advancement of Blood and Biotherapies
- Member of the International Society for Blood Transfusion Clinical Transfusion Working Party
- Reviewer for the International Society for Blood Transfusion Congress, 2023 and 2024
- Reviewer for the following international journals in 2024: *Anaesthesia & Analgesia*, *Journal of Haematology and Transfusion*



Department of Dermatology

Prof Frans Maruma

- **Prof Frans Maruma** collaborated with **Prof Aizuri Murad** on two projects in 2024, namely, *Core Outcomes set for PIH management, a Delphi process*. This project was in progress and was expected to end in 2024.
- **Prof Frans Maruma** is a member of the International Subcommittee for the Skin of Colour Society, based in the United States of America.

Department of Dermatology shines on the international stage

- **Dr Navlin Naidoo** was honoured with the prestigious International Society of Dermatology Global Education Award at the Continental Congress of Dermatology in Wroclaw, Poland, in May 2024. This award recognised the outstanding research towards his MMed in Dermatology at the UFS, which was also accepted as an oral presentation. Following his dynamic presentation in Poland, the International Society for Dermatology approached **Dr Naidoo** to represent them at the European Academy of Dermatology and Venerology (EADV), which was held in the Netherlands in September 2024. The congress is known as one of the most prestigious events in dermatology worldwide. Along with the invitation to present at the congress, Dr Naidoo was awarded a scholarship covering registration and logistic subsistence.
- **Dr Naidoo** is first author of a paper, titled 'Epidermal barrier function in human immunodeficiency virus-infected South African infants compared with uninfected', published in the *International Journal of Dermatology*. He submitted his paper 'Dermatological life quality assessment among patients afflicted by various cutaneous diseases, attending a dermatological clinic at Universitas Hospital in the Free State, South Africa' for publication. This study stands out for its comprehensive coverage of a wide variety of skin conditions and the inclusion of a diverse patient population in terms of race and language.

Prof Frans Maruma gains international recognition and joins various international committees

Prof Maruma has been appointed as an associate

editor for the *International Journal of Women's Dermatology* and serves as a regular reviewer for the *American Dermatology Journal*. **Prof Maruma** is a member of the International Subcommittee for the Skin of Colour Society in the USA. Along with his colleague, Dr MH Makuru, Prof Maruma has active research collaborations with **Dr Kelvin Mponda** from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Blantyre, Malawi.

Prof Maruma has led by example and has been involved with several collaborative international research projects with colleagues from Northwestern University (USA). The focus of this work is mainly related to pigmentation management (melasma and post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (PIH)).

Department of Internal Medicine

Dr Bathandwa Ntantiso

Dr Bathandwa Ntantiso presented a poster titled *Prevalence and management of anaemia in patients admitted to general internal medicine wards at Pelonomi Hospital*, in Bologna, Italy, on 20 April 2024. The abstract was accepted as a poster for the Network for the Advancement of Patient Blood Management, Haemostasis and Thrombosis (NATA) Congress that took place on the above date.

Dr J van Rensburg

Dr J van Rensburg collaborated with the African League Against Rheumatism (AFLAR) for studies in Africa.

Dr D Steyn

Dr D Steyn collaborated with the University of Oxford: OXAhep Study: Defining host and viral factors associated with hepatitis B virus control and clearance in Caucasian and African adults.

The following members have attended various international congresses:

- **Dr B Ntantiso** – MMed research – *Prevalence and management of anaemia in patients admitted to general internal medicine wards at Pelonomi Hospital* – Abstract accepted as poster for Congress in Bologna, Italy, 18 to 20 April 2024.
- **Dr T Mohangi** – MMed research – Presented at the International Society of Blood Transfusion Congress, Barcelona, Spain, June 2024.
- **Dr A Gerber** – MMed research – Presented at the Network for the Advancement of PMB,

Haemostasis and Haemostasis.

- **Drs Paul Bester, Anri Gerber, Debi Moagi** – Presented case studies in Poland at the
- Ninth McMaster International Review Course in Internal Medicine (MIRCIM).

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

Prof Corinna Walsh took part in the following international research collaborations:

- A virtual exchange programme focused on public health education in collaboration with various counterparts from Sweden, from January to June 2024. The collaboration included **Prof Ilona Grünberger** (Stockholm University, Sweden), **Prof Anneli Ivarsson** (Umeå University, Sweden), **Dr Zakir Hossin** (Karolinska Institute, Sweden), **Prof Zandile Mchiza** (University of the Western Cape), **Dr Whadi-ah Parker** (South African Human Sciences Research Council), **Prof Peter Bergsten** (Uppsala University), **Prof Rina Swart** (University of the Western Cape), and **Dr Masoud Vaezghasemi** (Umeå University). Continuing the collaboration, the virtual collaboration in research and teaching focused on courses and study programmes in public health sciences (child public health in particular), global public health and public health ethics, and public health nutrition. Some of the key activities in which this programme has succeeded, included:
 - Teaching: On 25 March 2024, **Prof Walsh** and **Dr Janet Carboo** (postdoctoral fellow) presented an online workshop for master's students in public health at Stockholm University. The title of the workshop was *Child health and nutrition: an international perspective*.
 - Weekly meetings: Every Friday, the collaborators met to work on a scoping review titled *Impact of Nutritional Interventions on Early Childhood Malnutrition in South Africa and Sweden* (Prospero registration: CRD42024513498).
 - Attended the SASUF Research and Innovation Week: From 13 to 17 May, the South Africa-Sweden University Forum hosted a research and innovation week in Sweden, where the abovementioned collaborators attended satellite symposiums titled *Using AI in Health* on 13 May 2024, and *Community engagement in research* on 14 May 2024.
 - Presented at the SASUF Sustainability Forum: The abovementioned collaborators presented

a workshop at the SASUF Sustainability Forum at Malmö University, Sweden, on 17 May 2024, titled *Impact of Nutritional Interventions on Early Childhood Malnutrition and Long-term Health Outcomes in South Africa and Sweden: A Scoping Review*.

- Site visit to Umeå University, Sweden: The collaborators visited the Department of Food and Nutrition on 20 May. They further participated in the moderation of masters' thesis defences on 21 May, followed by a meeting with **Prof Anna-Karin Hurtig**, a professor and leader in the Department of Epidemiology and Global Health (EpiGH), as well as an engagement in Region Västerbotten with **Maria Falck**, leader in the Public Health Unit, and the Salut programme.
- Site visit to Stockholm University, Sweden: The collaborators presented a seminar for PhD students, titled *Nutritional status of South African adults*, on 22 May, followed by their attendance and participation in MSc (Public Health) dissertation examinations on 23 May. This was followed by another site visit to the Department of Nutrition (Karolinska Institute and Stockholm University, Sweden) on 24 May, to meet with the organisers of the master's programme in nutrition at the Karolinska University Hospital in Huddinge, namely **Prof Marie Löf**, **Prof Christine Delisle Nystrom**, **Dr Christina Alexandria**, and **Prof Magdalena Rosell** (Programme Director for the master's in Nutrition Science).
- Visit to the UK from 7 to 10 May 2024: During this visit, Prof Walsh went for an interview at the Wellcome Trust headquarters in London for the Discovery Award application. This was followed by

a visit to the Department of Nutritional Sciences in the School of Life Course & Population Sciences at King's College London.

Department of Oncology

Dr Karina Vorster took part in the following internationalisation activities:

Dr Vorster attended the CAMBRIA-1 EMEA Investigator meeting, which took place in Estrel Berlin, Germany, from 5 to 9 February.

Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Dr M Mohosho participated in the following international research activities:

- ESGO 2024 Congress 7-10 March 2024 in Spain: Planned but currently failing due to lack of funds/ sponsorship.
- IGCS 2024 Annual Global Meeting 16-18 October in Ireland.

Department of Oncology

Prof A Sherriff participated in the following international research activities:

BMSF grant for the development of palliative care structures in the Free State with the appointment and training of staff, DOH doctors, nurses, social workers, and community caregivers.

Collaboration with MD Anderson and the Department of Medical Physics in AI automated delineation. **Prof Sherriff** also delivered a keynote address at the ESMO Africa preceptorship on *Breast cancer radiation and local management*.

Department of Pharmacology

Prof Motlalepula Matsabisa participated in the following internationalisation activities:

Prof Matsabisa participated in and chaired at the Global Technical Coordination Meeting hosted in New Delhi, India, from 17 to 23 March 2024.

Prof Matsabisa also attended and participated in the Natural Products Research and Innovation Centre retreat as a keynote speaker, as well as in the implementation plans of the newly accredited postgraduate academic programme at the centre. Uganda, Mbale, Kampala; 18-24 June 2024.

He further attended a joint project meeting with the Charité Centre for Global Health, Free University of Berlin, on antimicrobial resistance and the use of traditional medicines in Africa, and he also presented a paper. Germany, Berlin; 7-17 October 2024.

Prof M Sekhoacha delivered a presentation at the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre

Prof Sekhoacha delivered a presentation at the Second Oku Ampofo Memorial Conference at the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre Interim Office, Ghana. The presentation was titled *Determining the optimal host for SNAP-tag immunotherapeutic proteins for the treatment of triple negative breast cancer*. Jamnagar, Gujarat, India.

Participation in international committees and editorial boards by Prof Matsabisa

- Chaired and participated in the Global Technical Coordination Meeting. India, New Delhi; 17-23 March 2024.
- Guest Professor: Beijing University of Chinese

Medicine, China.

- Chair: WHO Regional Expert Committee on Traditional Medicines for COVID-19: participated in and chaired at the Global Technical Coordination Meeting. New Delhi, India. 17-23 March 2024.

Department of Surgery

Dr Susanna le Grange

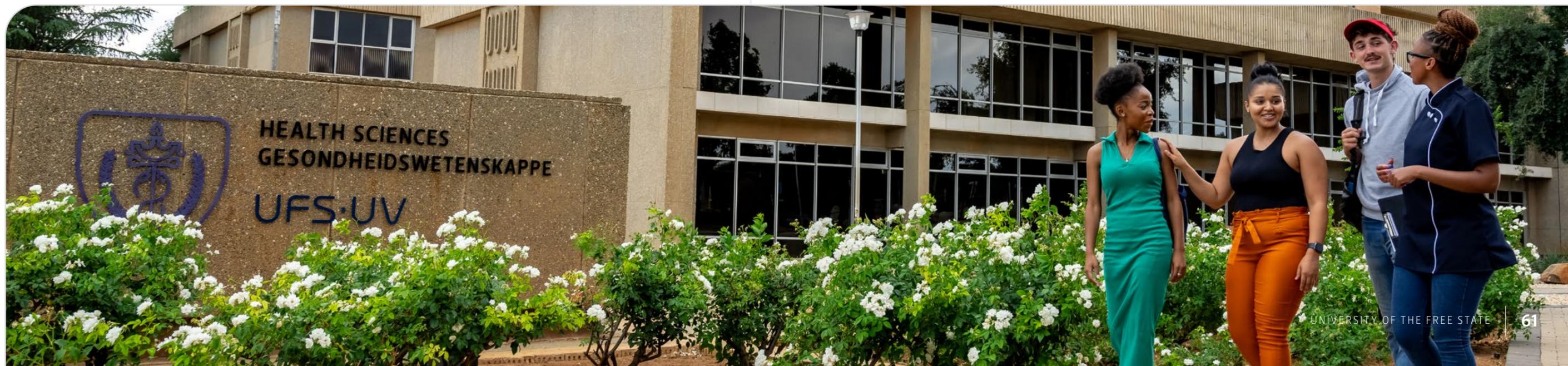
Dr Le Grange was an official representative of the Surgical Research Society of South Africa (SRS SA) as an office-bearer (secretary). She chaired the session and formed part of a judging team in Cambridge, United Kingdom, from 9 to 12 January 2024.

Division of Health Sciences Education

International boards:

Prof Lynette van der Merwe

Prof Lynette van der Merwe is a member of the Pan-African Consortium for Technology-Enhanced Health Professions Education (PACoTEH). The consortium was awarded an African Forum for Research and Education in Health (AFREhealth) Small Grant for a project titled *Needs assessment for technology-enhanced health professions education (HPE) in Eastern and Southern Africa*. The Division of Health Sciences Education would like to expand internationally, possibly through UFS-supported initiatives, e.g. South Africa-Sweden University Forum projects, which are dependent on the availability of funding. To this end, we met with colleagues from Umeå and Stockholm universities in Sweden, who visited the Faculty of Health Sciences in February 2024 as guests of **Prof Corinna Walsh** (Department of Nutrition and Dietetics).



School of Nursing

The School of Nursing participated in the following international research projects in 2024:

- **Project name:** *Improvement of research learning experiences for undergraduate nursing students.*

Researchers involved were **Dr Melanie Pienaar**, **Prof Marianne Reid**, and **Prof Champion Nyoni** from the UFS, and **Dr Florence Mbutia**, **Winfred Wambui**, and **Dr Simon Githui** from the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT), Kenya.

The signed MoU between the UFS and DeKUT has a strong research focus, leading to the exploration of undergraduate nursing students' undergraduate research. The project was built on the co-presentation of undergraduate research modules between the two universities. The project is in the data analysis stage, with resultant publication in process.

- **Project name:** *Older adults' perception and experience of vulnerability and inequality in recovering from the pandemic.*

The researcher involved in this project was **Dr Jeanette Sebaeng**.

The overarching goal of this project is to shed light on older adults' perceptions of their vulnerability and inequality during the COVID-19 pandemic and generate knowledge on recovery strategies that will promote their social inclusion, equity, and quality of life. The total seed funding awarded for this project was \$11 000, \$5 000 of which was granted by the Health Research Institute (HRI), and \$6 000 by the President's Research Seed Grant. The project was in the ethics and data collection phase.

- **Project name:** *Health literacy among final-year nursing students.*

The researchers involved in this project were **Dr Melanie Pienaar** and **Prof Marianne Reid** from the UFS; **Dr Kija Malale** from the Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences, Tanzania; **Dr Anne Moorhead** from Ulster University, Ireland; and **Dr Florence Mbutia** from the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, Kenya. This project enabled researchers with shared research interests in health communication to investigate the health literacy status of final-year nursing students. These students' health literacy status was forecasted to influence their nursing practice when entering the profession.

- **Project name:** *Supporting mental health in employment path in Africa (SuMHEPA).*

The researchers who took part in this project included **Dr Ronelle Jansen**, **Mari Prinsloo**, and **Kutlwano Motsemme** from the UFS, as well as colleagues from Latvia, Finland, Cameroon, and Zimbabwe. The project was aimed at supporting mental health in the employment path in Africa and further aimed to address youth unemployment in the sub-Saharan African region by focusing on providing mental health support and developing a virtual toolkit for students and youth. This project was funded through the Erasmus+ programme and European Union funding.

Activity status as of 2024: Project was rejected by funders in July 2024.

- **Project name:** *Infection prevention control through virtual reality in Africa: a middle-range theory.*

The researchers who took part in this project include **Dr Lizemari Hugo-Van Dyk**, **Prof Champion Nyoni**, **Benjamin Botha**, and **Prof Yvonne Botma** from the UFS; **Prof Louise Pretorius** and **Danial Ashipala** (University of Namibia); **Dr Lucky Mhango** (Mzuzu University, Malawi); **Mpho Shelile** and **Ntsoaki Ralejoana** (National University of Lesotho); **Collins Atta Poku** and **Abigail Kusi Amponsah** (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana); and **Prof Kefalotse Dithole** (University of Botswana).

The University of the Free State and other African nursing education institutions have collaborated, using desktop-based virtual reality, to transfer infection prevention and control skills to undergraduate nursing students. The project was funded by the UFS Digitalisation Fund (2023-2025).

Activity status as of 2024: Data collection for Phase 2 at four nursing education institutions in Namibia and one nursing education institution in Lesotho has been completed. Ethics application submitted to Ghana, Malawi, and Kenya. As of December 2024, Phases 1-3 have been completed, and the development is nearing completion. An additional data collection method has been introduced in Phase 3 to test the application before implementation.

- **Project name:** *Emergency remote learning research.*

The researchers involved in this project were **Prof**

Champion Nyoni, as well as other researchers from Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Uganda, and Zambia.

The focus of this project was on technology-enhanced health professions education. The overarching aim was to characterise the technology within health professions education in sub-Saharan Africa. A consortium was formulated and would be registered in Zambia.

Funding: Grant application is under review at the African Forum for Health, Education and Research.

Activity status as of 2024: Ethics clearance has been sought from the National University of Science and Technology in Zimbabwe. Reciprocal clearance to be sought at the UFS.

- **Project name:** *Development and validation of a Swahili cancer health literacy test.*

The researchers involved in this project were **Dr Kija Nchmabi Malale** (Tanzania); **Prof Marianne Reid**, and **Dr Melanie Pienaar** from the UFS.

The study was aimed at addressing the need to improve cancer treatment in six Swahili-speaking countries in Africa. A stepwise process to develop and validate a Swahili cancer health literacy test is structured according to specific steps. The project was funded by the UFS Centre for Graduate Support to the value of R50 000.

Activity status as of 2024: The desktop research has been completed. Article is under review. Awaiting feedback from the Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSREC) on further steps in the research. The project is to proceed in 2025.

- **Project name:** *IPE CAT: Interprofessional trainers' competences, assessment and training programme.*

The researchers involved in this project were **Dr Ronelle Jansen** and **Prof Marion Huber** from the UFS, and other colleagues.

This global project was aimed at the development of the faculty, and to facilitate interprofessional education. The project included various countries, and grant funding was sought from the Swiss government.

Funding: Grant application still pending.

- **Project name:** *Emotional intelligence: a key to change the clinical learning platform.*

The researchers involved in this project were



Prof Lizemari Hugo-Van Dyk, Dr Rick de Villers, and Dr Andrea Rose.

Background: Interdisciplinary project.

All health-care professional students require work-integrated learning (WIL) that occurs on the clinical learning platform. Therefore, a conducive clinical learning environment (CLE) is essential for optimal learning. Students from several health-care professions often experience the CLE as complex and unfriendly. The relationships between students, educators, and health-care professionals determine the learning climate. Various authors describe emotional intelligence (EQ) as the foundation for building and maintaining relationships within the CLE. The relationship between role players in health care in the Free State has been strained over the past decade, consequently compromising the clinical learning platform. Therefore, this study aims to improve relationships between students, staff, and educators by creating an awareness of EQ.

Funding: Interdisciplinary grant.

Activity status as of 2024: Proposal development.

Department of Anaesthesiology

UFS represented at the Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre

Dr Catharina Taute represented the department in gaining new knowledge and learning about new research and evidence-based medicine. This was during the 18th World Congress of Anaesthesiologists at the Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre, which took place in Singapore from 3 to 7 March 2024.

Research and Development Unit

Dr Claire Armour has participated in the following international research activities:

- *Minimisation of blood loss and optimisation of coagulation* – AfSBT Congress, Kampala, Uganda, 4-7 March 2024 (presentation).
- International Society of Blood Transfusion and Africa Society for Blood Transfusion: Presentation on *Patient blood management survey results* – AfSBT Congress, Kampala, Uganda, 4-7 March 2024.

Dr Claire Armour has served/s as part of the following international boards and committees:

- Chair of the Scientific Programme of the Africa Society for Blood Transfusion Congress, Kampala, Uganda – March 2024.
- Elected to chair the upcoming AfSBT Congress in Windhoek, Namibia – March 2026.
- Co-Chair of the Global Transfusion Forum Education Subcommittee – January 2024.
- Member of the EXCO of the Global Transfusion Forum – January 2024.
- Member of the Research subcommittee of the Global Transfusion Forum – 2022-present.
- Member of the Global Standards Committee of the Association for the Advancement of Blood and Biotherapies – 2024.
- Member of the International Society of Blood Transfusion Clinical Transfusion Working Party – June 2010-present.
- Member of the Erasmus + Grant team: *Intercontinental health alliance to develop high-impact sustainable educational programmes on quality management in transfusion medicine to enhance accessibility and safety of blood components.*

Dr Claire Armour also attended the International Society for Blood Transfusion Congress in Barcelona, Spain from 23 to 27 June 2024.

INCOMING AND OUTGOING INTERNATIONAL STAFF EXCHANGES

This category showcases activities relating to incoming international staff hosted; outgoing international staff exchange other than conference and workshop attendance.

Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery

The Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery participated in the following incoming and outgoing international exchange activities:

- **Department:** Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery, Rostock, Germany.
Duration: Continuing
Institution visited: Virtual/online
UFS member: Prof FE Smit
Country visited: Germany.
- **Department:** Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery, University of Zurich.
Duration: Continuing
Institution visited: Virtual/online – Simulation, infective endocarditis.

Country visited: Switzerland.

UFS member: Prof FE Smit

- **Department:** Cardiovascular Surgery.
Duration: Two visits of one week each.
Home institution: University of Zurich.
Home country: Switzerland.
UFS member: Prof Carlos A Mestres.
Achievements: Publications. Research supervision and abstracts.
- **Department:** Cardiovascular Surgery.
Duration: Continuing.
Home institution: Leipzig University.
Home country: Germany.
UFS member: Prof Pascal M Dohmen.
Achievements: Publications. Research supervision and abstracts.

Department of Oncology

The Department of Oncology participated in the following incoming and outgoing international exchange activities:

- **Department:** Oncology.
Duration: Three days.
Home country: Tunisia.
Visitor from Tunisia to assist with training and the first gynaecological interstitial brachytherapy done in Southern Africa in our department. He was here for three days. The procedure and impact of the skills availability was widely publicised nationally and internationally.
- **Department:** Oncology.
Duration: Three to six months.
Home institution: Hanze University of Applied Sciences.
Home country: The Netherlands.
They visited our radiation unit for their practical rotations.

School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SoHRS)

SoHRS hosts University of Virginia students for a pilot exchange programme

The School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SoHRS) hosted four students from the University of Virginia (UVA) on the Bloemfontein Campus (UFS) from 8 July to 9 August 2024. The initiative focused on SHRS3700, a module designed for participation by both UFS and UVA students. This pilot project involved students completing an assignment that required them to summarise their individual departmental research protocols as social media artefacts. Students affiliated with the Centre for Global Health Equity at UVA – who are enrolled in various programmes at their home institution – participated in the planned exchange. Upon completion, the four students had the opportunity to participate in various formats of exchanges during their time at the UFS between 8 July and 9 August 2024. This initiative aimed to pair SHRS3700 students with the four selected UVA students, who acted as peer collaborators on their assigned science communication project.

Department of Pharmacology

Members of the Department of Pharmacology were involved in the following international incoming and outgoing exchanges:

- **Department:** Pharmacology.
Duration: Ten days.
Institution visited: Peking Union Medical College.
Country visited: Peoples Republic of China.
Achievements: Presentation to the faculty, collaboration established.
- **Department:** Pharmacology.
Duration: Ten days.
Institution visited: Beijing University of Chinese



Medicine.

Country visited: Peoples Republic of China.

Achievements: Presentation to the department and students of Pharmacology.

- **Department:** Pharmacology.
Duration: Seven days.
Institution visited: Centre for Plant Medicine Research, Mampong.
Country visited: Ghana.
Achievements: Conference presentation, joint funding proposal written.
- **Department:** Pharmacology (Prof Tang and Ma).
Duration: Ten days.
Home institution: Beijing University of Chinese Medicine.
Home country: China.
Achievements: Presentations to staff and students; new joint project proposal written.
- **Department:** Pharmacology (Dr Samuel Obakiro / Prof Paul Waako).
Duration: Five days.
Home institution: Busitema University.
Home country: Uganda.
Achievements: Joint lecturing and a collaboration project written.

INTERNATIONALISATION OF LEARNING AND TEACHING, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

This category is concerned with new collaborative degrees, virtual exchanges including COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning), student incoming and outgoing exchanges, and other significant developments relating to internationalisation of learning and teaching.

Department of Anaesthesiology

Dr Catharina Taute

Dr Taute represented the department in gaining new knowledge and learning about new research and evidence-based medicine at the Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre. Singapore. 1-8 March 2024.

Department of Clinical Medicine

In the department, the following courses recruited international students:

- The Patient Blood Management short learning programme for professional nurses received three applications from Uganda, with one successful

registration and enrolment for the course in 2024.

- The Patient Blood Management short learning programme for medical doctors received two applications from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), one from Kenya, and two from Uganda. No successful registrations and enrolments were recorded.
- In the Fogarty SA Designing Clinical Research Course, which took place from May to June 2024, the following students/staff were in attendance: **Teboho Tiiti, Liska Budding, Gloria Hyera, and Slindile Dlamini. Dr Claire Armour (Barrett)** was a mentor and faculty member for this programme. This initiative was funded by a grant awarded to the University of Cape Town and the University of California, San Francisco, with the UFS as a partner institution.

Department of Neurology

Internationalisation activities of which Dr Liesl Smit was part:

Dr Smit took part in an internationalisation of teaching and learning activity that focused on learning more about functional neurological disorders, a relatively new disorder that is complex and not well understood. This activity took place in Palazzo della Gran Guardia, Italy, from 31 May to 12 June 2024.

Department of Surgery

Dr Wikus Wessel Mulder participated in the following internationalisation of teaching and learning activities in 2024:

- Educational purpose training. Excel, London, United Kingdom. 22-23 April 2024.
- Dedicated vascular course for fellows in training and workshops hosted by an international expert. Maastricht, the Netherlands. 2-7 March 2024.
- **Dr WW Mulder** – Educational purpose/training. Excel, London, United Kingdom, 22-26 April 2024.

Haematology and Cell Biology

Prof Jaco Joubert, Head of Department and Associate Professor at the UFS:

Invited talk: Prof MJ Coetzee, *Hereditary haemorrhagic telangiectasia (HHT) and other vascular bleeding disorders* at the African Society for Blood Transfusion, Kampala, Uganda, 4-7 March 2024.

Department of Pharmacology

Members of the Department of Pharmacology were involved in the following internationalisation of teaching and learning activities:

- Benchmarking visit towards a regulatory framework for herbal medicines – international benchmarking undertaken in Brazil (ANVISA), China (NMPA), and Ghana (Ghana FDA).
- Visit to Ghana and meetings with traditional health practitioners. Met associations of traditional health practitioners and traditional health practitioner council.
- Visited Chinese medical hospitals for understanding the Chinese health-care system. Met with Chinese traditional medicine administrations and visited pharmaceutical companies in China and Ghana.

Research and Development Unit

Dr Claire Armour participated in the following internationalisation of teaching and learning activities:

Dr Claire Armour worked on developing a curriculum to improve laboratory skills in blood banks in LMICS (working with colleagues in Canada, USA, Uganda).

Dr Armour further conducted a short learning programme in Patient Blood Management (PBM) for trained nurses from the following countries:

- Uganda (1)

Other short learning programmes in Patient Blood Management entailed training doctors in this discipline. The countries of origin of these trained doctors were:

- Uganda (2)
- Namibia (2)
- Botswana (1)
- DRC (2)

In the Fogarty SA Designing Clinical Research Course (May-June 2024), the following students/staff attended:

- **Teboho Titi**
- **Liska Budding**
- **Gloria Hyera**
- **Slindile Dlamini.**
- **Dr Claire Armour (Barrett)** was a mentor and faculty member on this programme. The programme was funded by NIH Fogarty, a grant awarded to UCT and the University of California San Francisco, with the UFS as a partner institution. 🇷🇷



FACULTY OF THE HUMANITIES



Dean
Prof Mogomme Masoga



Faculty Internationalisation
Coordinators
**Dr Grey Magaiza and
Lutendo Mabata**

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH, PUBLICATIONS AND COLLABORATIONS

This category encompasses all activities related to international research, including conference attendances, conference presentations, hosting of international guests for research and academic purposes, and international academic collaborations.

Centre for Gender and Africa Studies

Collaboration on chapter with Prof Jonathan Fisher (University of Birmingham, UK)

Prof Stephanie Cawood collaborated with Prof Jonathan Fisher (University of Birmingham, UK) on a research chapter (based on co-research from a Newton Advanced Fellowship), titled 'Heritage, memory, and the personalisation of New Resistance Movement rule'. In: M Khisa. *Autocratisation in contemporary Uganda: Clientelism, coercion and social control*. London: Zed Books.

Collaboration and co-presentation with Appalachian State University (USA)

Dr Grey Magaiza (UFS) and Dr Julie Shepherd-Powell (Appalachian State University, North Carolina, USA) collaborated and co-presented on a panel themed *Comparative Mountain Epistemes* for the Appalachian Studies Association Conference held in Cullowhee (North Carolina, USA), 7-9 March 2024, hosted by Western Carolina University and the Appalachian Studies Association.

Centre for Gender and Africa Studies (CGAS) publication

Dr Munyaradzi Mushonga from the University of the Free State Centre for Gender and Africa Studies co-published a chapter (as first author), titled "You have

to pay with your body': The precarity of subaltern Basotho migrant women within the Lesotho-South Africa border(land)s'. This chapter formed part of a book project with Michigan State University, titled *Migration and the role of borders in the making of Southern Africa*, which was published by Lexington Press in early 2024. The book was officially launched on 22 May 2024.

Prof Hussein Solomon participated in the following research-related internationalisation activities:

- **Prof Solomon**, together with colleagues at Jawaharlal Nehru University and the African Studies Association of India, co-hosted a two-day conference on *Africa in the World* on 27 and 28 February 2024. Some resolutions that came from this conference included the planning of an edited book around the conference theme.
- **Prof Solomon** also presented a paper titled 'Climate change and conflict: the African dimension', at the conference on Climate change and its impact on security in Africa, co-hosted by Global Action to Prevent War (New York) and the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. 18 March 2024.
- **Prof Solomon** delivered a keynote address titled, 'External diplomacy of human resource development and capacity building'. He further presented a paper to the International Webinar on External Diplomacy of Human Resource Development and Capacity Building, co-hosted by the Financial University, Russia, the African Studies Association of India, and the Centre for African Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India. 28 May 2024.
- **Prof Solomon** further delivered a paper presentation titled 'Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) Plus and Climate Change', in India, Europe, and the Global South: Asserting Identities and Social Change conference hosted by the Department of Political Sciences, Maitreyi College, Delhi University, India. 3 May 2024.

Research internationalisation activities in which Dr Joseph Kamwendo participated:

- **Dr Joseph Kamwendo** participated as a resource person in the Africa Forest Restoration (AFR100) project workshop hosted by the African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD) in

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso from 24 to 29 March 2024, training delegates on how to gender mainstream the project.

- **Dr Kamwendo** also collaborated with Prof Rhoda Bakuwa of the University of Malawi in publishing an article, titled 'Gendering the decision-making positions in higher education in Malawi: a cross-sectional gender audit in three selected universities,' in the *African Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies (AJIMS)*. 2024.
- **Dr Kamwendo** further co-authored a paper with Dr Munyaradzi Chidarikire of the Great Zimbabwe University, titled 'Analysing the social-economic implications of masculine gender-based violence within Zimbabwe'. This presentation was delivered online at the 15th International Interdisciplinary Conference hosted by the Multimedia University of Kenya from 24 to 29 June 2024.

Research and academic-related internationalisation activities in which Dr Munyaradzi Mushonga participated:

- **Dr Mushonga** took part in the Granada Decolonial Summer School, which was themed *Critical Muslim Studies: Decolonial Struggles and Liberation Theologies: Decolonial Islamic Spirituality and Liberation in Times of Palestinian Genocide*. This summer school took place in Granada, Spain, 10–15 June 2024.
- **Dr Mushonga** was further co-editor and co-author of a publication titled *Migration, Borders, and Borderlands in Southern Africa in Historical Perspective*. **Dr Mushonga** also published Mushonga, M, et al (eds.). *Migration, Borders, and Borderlands: Making National Identity in Southern African Communities*, Lexington Publishers: New York, 2024, p.p. 1-15.
- Furthermore, **Dr Mushonga** co-published a chapter with Prof Stephanie Cawood (second author), titled 'You have to pay with your body': the precarity of subaltern Basotho migrant women within the Lesotho-South Africa border(land)s, in *Migration, Borders and Borderlands: Making National Identity in Southern African Communities*, as part of a book project with Michigan State University, Lexington Press, 2024, p.p. 225-252.
- **Dr Mushonga** was also a discussant (online) for 'They came to us; we did not rape them': Rape, Abduction and Forced Marriages in Biafra during the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970 by Dr Taiwo Bello, Assistant Professor of African History at Oklahoma State University, United States, 9 May

2024, organised by the UFS Department of History.

- With the full support of the entire Centre for Gender and Africa Studies, **Dr Munyaradzi Mushonga** successfully presided over the hosting of the colloquium on 'Decolonising' knowledge production in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Arts (HSSA): Reflecting on a decade of the Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences in South African Higher Education' from 27 to 29 August 2024. In total, 53 papers, including keynotes, were presented. The keynotes were delivered by people from South Africa (five), Sweden (one), and Senegal (one). Several papers have been submitted for possible publication in *Acta Academica* or the *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*; however, the official date is still pending.
- **Dr M Mushonga** delivered a keynote address titled 'Decoloniality: The sine qua none of African Education and Development' at the Lesotho Bicentennial Conference on 3 October 2024. The conference was themed *Celebrating 200 Years of Basotho Nation Building: Advancing Epistemic Diversity for Sustainable Development*, which took place from 1 to 3 October 2024 at the National University of Lesotho, co-hosted by the Academic Forum for Development of Lesotho, the National University of Lesotho, the Decolonial International Network, and the University of the Free State.
- **Dr M Mushonga** formed part of a panel at the *Policy Dialogue Series 2: Curriculum Design and Decolonisation*, organised and hosted by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Embassy of the Netherlands in Pretoria, South Africa, on 22 October 2025. Their contributions focused on 'Europeanisation versus Africanisation'.

Prof Pamila Gupta participated in various research-related internationalisation activities:

- **Prof Gupta** was invited as panel reviewer, 'Arts and Culture' Consolidator Grant, European Research Council (ERC), Brussels, Belgium. 16-19 April 2024.
- **Prof Gupta** delivered a paper/presentation titled: 'Looking for/listening to crowds in the Capital Art Studio Collection' for the *Camera South Asia II Conference*, hosted by the Columbia University, New York, 26 April 2024.
- **Prof Gupta** delivered a paper/presentation titled: 'Of waves, plates and boats: portrait of a Goan Sea artist' for the *Arts of the Indian Ocean Conference*, University of Toronto, Canada. 2-4 May 2024.
- **Prof Gupta** further participated in a collaborative

research project with Caio Simoes de Araujo (University of the Western Cape) to finalise a book titled, *Regional Drift* under contract with Routledge UK (publication October 2024). Prof Gupta was also a co-author of the introduction and solicited a set of international contributors (Durham University, Malta University, University of Namibia, North Carolina State University, UCT, and Wits University).

- **Prof Gupta** participated in a collaborative grant writing project with Lindsay Bremner from the University of Westminster (UK).
- **Prof Gupta** has reached the finalisation of a chapter submission, 'Decoloniality, Indian Ocean connections, and visual imaginaries in the Global South', for the *Oxford Handbook of the Global South*, Eds. Christopher Lee and Anne Garland Mahler, Oxford UP, 2024.
- Was invited to deliver a keynote lecture titled, 'Reflections on Portuguese decolonisation in the Indian Ocean world' presented at the 'Decolonising' knowledge production in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Arts (HSSA): Reflecting on a decade of the Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences in South African Higher Education Conference, hosted by CGAS, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, SA. 27-29 August 2024.
- Delivered a paper/presentation, "The good life': care and dwelling in a post-pandemic world' at the *Post-Pandemic Imaginaries: Space, Culture, and Memory after Lockdown Conference*, organised by the Centre for Culture and Everyday Life in the School of the Arts, University of Liverpool, UK. 5-6 September 2024.
- Was involved in a discussion of current research at the Radical Humanities Laboratory, University College Cork, Ireland, 9 September 2024; posted a paper presentation they delivered.
- Invited to be a panel reviewer, 'Arts and Culture' Consolidator Grant, European Research Council (ERC), Brussels, Belgium. 23-27 September 2024.
- Invited to deliver a keynote presentation titled, 'Navigating space, time and meaning with Francis Xavier' for *The Pan-Asian Heritage of St. Francis Xavier: Between Memory and Contemporary Appropriations International Conference* held in Goa, India. 12-15 December 2024. Sponsored by St. Xavier's College, Goa University (Goa), and the Initiative for the Study of Asian Catholics (ISAC), Singapore.

- Discussant for panel themed, 'The arts after Xavier' at the *After Xavier: Representations of Christianity in India and Beyond Conference*, 11 December 2024. Goa, India. Sponsored by the Xavier Centre of Historical Research.

Prof Heidi Hudson published the following international publication:

Hudson, Heidi and **Diana Højlund Madsen**. February 2024. 'The politics of space and relationality: localisation and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Uganda. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17502977.2023.2295367>.

Internationalisation activities in which Dr Grey Magaiza participated:

- Co-publication of chapter with Prof Chitja Twala (first author) titled, 'Of paqama gates and paqama scouts: the inner workings of regulated illegal and irregular border crossing between Lesotho and South Africa' as part of a book project with Michigan State University, *Migration and the role of borders in the Making of Southern Africa*, published by Lexington Press in early 2024. Book launch: 22 May 2024.
- Collaborative grant writing with Dr Demetris Jordan from Harvard Medical School in the USA.
- Collaborative grant writing with Dr Noleen Chikowore from the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom.

Centre for Health Systems and Research Development

Scholastic internationalisation activities that members of the UFS CHS&RD took part in:

- **Profs Gladys Kigozi-Male** and **Michelle Engelbrecht** are collaborating on a research project on older adults' experiences of HIV in the Free State with Prof Monique Brown from the University of South Carolina, USA, and Dr Perpetual Chikobvu from the Free State Department of Health.
- **Prof Gladys Kigozi-Male** participated in a collaborative MRC SA-UK research grant application to develop and test an 'app-less' intervention to improve sex workers' mental health and well-being in South and East Africa, together with researchers and programme implementers from South Africa, Kenya, and the UK.

- Working with a co-author from the World Health Organisation, Dr Michel Muteba, on the following book chapter: Ntombela B, Heunis C, Chikobvu P, Muteba M, Tshilo T, & Lenyehelo M. (2024). Chapter 13: 'Leveraging the Go. Data digital platform for COVID-19 pandemic epidemiological surveillance: Case of the Free State, South Africa'. In: *The Emerging South African Digital Health System*. Pretoria: National Department of Health.

Publications and authorships submitted and executed by members of the CHS&RD

- Heunis JC, Joubert M, & Ncube A.** (2024). Chapter 13: 'Social worker role-taking during communicable disease outbreaks in South Africa: the need for disaster management training'. In: S Levy, U Odera Okoye, PT Tanga, & Ingram R (Eds.) *Routledge Handbook on African Social Work Education*. Oxfordshire: Routledge International Handbooks; pp. 152-164. ISBN: 9781032322957. This is an officially published chapter.
- Chikobvu P, Heunis C, Ntombela B, Tshilo TR, Setlogelo KM, Lamani VM, Lehong MA, Ramalitsi SF, Tlotshane PB, Makwana T, & Sehloho MR.** (2024). Chapter 12: 'Implementation of the Health Patient Registration System in the Free State: lessons learned'. In: *The Emerging South African Digital Health System*. Pretoria: National Department of Health. The status of this publication: accepted.
- Ntombela B, Heunis C, Chikobvu P, Muteba M, Tshilo T, & Lenyehelo M.** (2024). Chapter 13: 'Leveraging the Go. Data digital platform for COVID-19 pandemic epidemiological surveillance: case of the Free State, South Africa'. In: *The Emerging South African Digital Health System*. Pretoria: National Department of Health. The status of this publication: accepted.
- Tshilo TR, Heunis C, Chikobvu P, Maine PM, Moremi M, Ntombela B, Selepe LL, & Litheko M.** (2024). Chapter 23: 'Use of master health facility lists during COVID-19 vaccination in the Free State: evolution and experiences.' In: *The Emerging South African Digital Health System*. Pretoria: National Department of Health. The status of this publication: accepted.
- Joubert MM, Heunis JC, Ncube A, & Szarzynski J.** (2024). Chapter 2: 'Social work mental health and psychosocial support to vulnerable groups during COVID-19 in Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, Free State, South Africa'. In: AL Shokane, A Keet, & V Nadesan (Eds), *Social work in the 21st Century: Scholarship and praxis reimaged towards*

vulnerability. Cape Town: AOSIS. The status of this publication: accepted.

- The following article was produced and published with the following reference: **Heunis C, Van Jaarsveldt D, Chikobvu C, Kigozi-Male G, & Litheko M.** (2024). 'Exploring health research priority setting in a South African province: a nominal group technique approach'. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 21:861. The status of this publication: accepted.

The following articles were accepted for publishing:

- Peresu E, De Graeve D, Heunis JC, Kigozi NG.** 'Cost-effectiveness of ambulatory clinic- and homebased multidrug-resistant tuberculosis management models in Eswatini'. *BMC Infectious Diseases* (Accepted).
- Kigozi-Male G, Heunis C, Engelbrecht M, Tweheyo R.** 'Prevalence and factors associated with possible depression among new patients undergoing susceptible tuberculosis treatment in a South African province'. *Southern African Journal of Infectious Diseases* (Accepted).

Collaboration on a research project investigating comorbidities among older mental health users admitted at the Free State Psychiatric Complex in the Free State

Profs G Kigozi-Male and M Engelbrecht from the UFS Centre for Health Systems Research & Development collaborated with **Prof M Brown** from the University of South Carolina, USA, and **Dr L Makhele** from the Free State Department of Health on a research project investigating comorbidities among older mental health users admitted at the Free State Psychiatric Complex in the Free State.

Department of Hebrew

The UFS Department of Hebrew achieved the following milestones as far as research internationalisation by their full-time staff is concerned (excluding international research fellows):

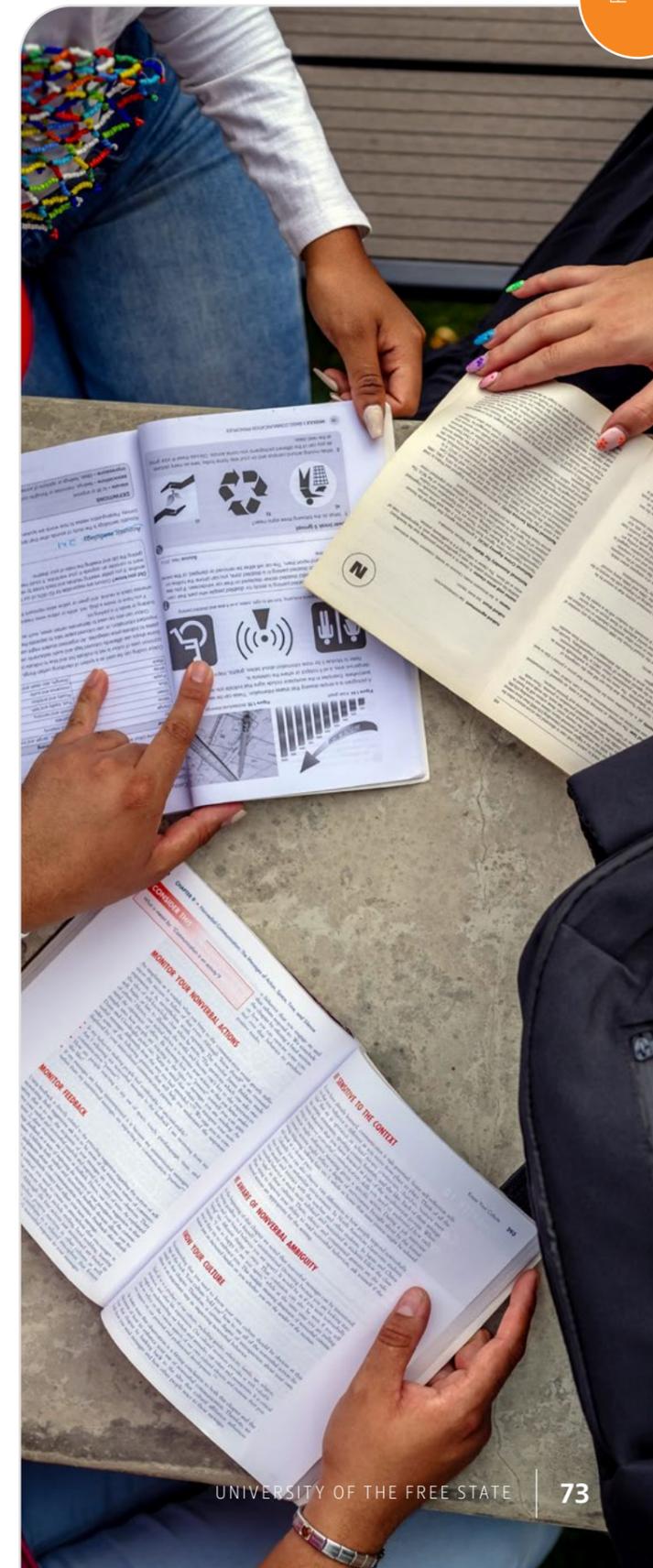
International Presentations:

- Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** and **Prof Jacobus Naudé**, 'Special grammar and the oral-scribal emergence of the alphabetic acrostic poems of Lamentations.' Invited presentation at the *15th Conference on Orality and Literacy in the Ancient World*. Ohio Northern University (USA), 26-29 June 2024.

- Prof Naudé** and **Prof Miller-Naudé** were invited to present a paper titled 'The diachronic trajectory of the quantifier in Biblical Hebrew' at the international *Ullendorff Conference for Semitic Linguistics*, Hebrew University, 10-12 January 2024 (cancelled because of war).
- Prof Tania Notarius** and **Prof Tshokolo Makutoane**, 'Comparative study of Ancient Near Eastern Rural communities and contemporary South Africa', a paper presented at the *International Interdisciplinary Security of Land Tenure Conference*, University of the Free State (Bloemfontein, South Africa) from 6 to 8 May 2024.
- Prof Makutoane**, 'The role of oral Bible translation in language development for minority communities: a complexity analysis'. **Prof Makutoane** was invited to present the abovementioned paper at Wycliffe South Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa, from 15 to 19 April 2024.
- Prof Tania Notarius** presented 'Impersonal experiential constructions in the ancient Northwest Semitic languages' at the *Deutsche Morgenlandische Gesellschaft, Arbeitsgruppe fuer Semitistik Workshop*, Leipzig University, in April 2024.

International Publications:

- Prof Jacobus Naudé** and **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé**, 'The semiotics of theology and alterity in twenty-first century Bible re-translations: the 2020 Afrikaans *Direkte Vertaling* [direct translation] as a case in point'. *Translation as Empowerment: New Bible (Re-translations)*, edited by Sabine Dievenkorn. Berlin: Frank & Timme.
- Prof Jacobus Naudé** and **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé**, 'South Africa (history of translation)', invited contribution to *Encyclopedia of Translation and Interpreting*. Edited by Javier Franco Aixelá and Ricardo Muñoz Martín. Granada: Asociación Ibérica de Estudios de Traducción e Interpretación. The publication can be found on the below links. https://www.aieti.eu/enti/south_africa_ENG/; <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10950029>
- Prof Tania Notarius** published 'Passive voice in Ugaritic in historical perspective' in *Leshonenu* 86:7-27, 2024. (in Hebrew)
- Kevin Chau** published 'Psalm 118.' in *Psalms: My Psalm, My Context*. Edited by Athalya Brenner-Idan and Gale A. Yee. London: T&T Clark, 2024, pp. 164-68.



International research in progress:

- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé**, 'Mimesis and convention in the representation of conversation in Ugaritic myth.' In Peter T Daniels, Edward L Greenstein, John Huehnergard, Mark Leson, and Philip C Schmitz, editors, *May You Favor the Work of His Hands: Essays in Memory of Michael Patrick O'Connor*. Atlanta: Society Biblical Literature. (accepted)
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé**, 'Intransitive verb classes in Shilluk' (with Leoma G Gilley). (in preparation).
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** and **Prof Jacobus Naudé**. 'A case for distributive quantification of *Kol* in Biblical Hebrew.' In JCE Watson et al. (eds.), *Interconnected Traditions: Semitic languages, literatures, cultures*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers. The publication submission was accepted and can be found on the following link: <https://doi.org/10.11647/obp.0463.09>
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** and **Prof Jacobus Naudé**. 'Lamentations'. *Baylor Handbooks on the Hebrew Text*. Waco, TX: Baylor Press (contracted; in preparation).
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** and **Prof Jacobus Naudé**. *Waltke-O'Connor Biblical Hebrew Syntax Revised* [provisional title]. Eisenbrauns (under contract; in preparation).
- **Prof Jacobus Naudé**, 'Syntactic features of *kol* as a polarity item in negative statements in Biblical Hebrew.' In Peter T Daniels, Edward L Greenstein, John Huehnergard, Mark Leson, and Philip C. Schmitz, editors, *May You Favor the Work of His Hands: Essays in Memory of Michael Patrick O'Connor*. Atlanta: Society Biblical Literature. (accepted)
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** and **Prof Jacobus Naudé**, 'The translators of the Septuagint and its/ their theology in the meaning-making of sacred space.' In *Septuagint Theology and Its Reception: Stellenbosch Congress on the Septuagint, 2022*, 49-88. Edited by Johann Cook, Wolfgang Kraus, and Martin Rösel. *Septuagint and Cognate Studies* 78. Atlanta: Scholars Press. (in press)
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** and **Prof Jacobus Naudé**, 'Semantics and pragmatics', invited contribution to the *Cambridge Companion to the Bible and Linguistics*, edited by Stanley E Porter. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (in preparation)
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** and **Prof Jacobus Naudé**, 'Parallel corpora of the Bible in minority languages', invited contribution to *A Handbook of Corpus Translation Studies*, edited by Defeng Li and John Corbett. London: Routledge. (in press)
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** and **Prof Jacobus Naudé**, 'Religious texts, translation, and censorship', invited contribution to the *Handbook on Censorship and Translation*, edited by Denise Merkle and Brian Baer. London: Routledge. (in press)
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** and **Prof Jacobus Naudé**: 'Chomskyan linguistics'. *Encyclopaedia of Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics*, edited by Stanley E Porter et al. Grand Rapids: Baker.
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** and **Prof Jacobus Naudé** (editors), *Linguistic Approaches to Tense, Aspect, Modality in Biblical Hebrew*. Eisenbrauns (in preparation).
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé**, **Prof Jacobus Naudé** and **Prof Mogomme Masoga**, 'Religion and translation: meaning-making of the sacred.' Invited contribution to *More Border Crossings. Translation Studies and Other Disciplines* edited by Yves Gambier and Luc van Doorslaer. Amsterdam: Benjamins (in preparation).
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé**, **Prof Jacobus Naudé** and **Dr Daniel J Wilson**, 'The negative existential in post-predicate position in Biblical Hebrew'. *Mats Eskhult Festschrift*. Uppsala: Uppsala University. (accepted)
- **Prof Tania Notarius** submitted a paper for publication titled, 'Impersonal experiential constructions in ancient Northwest Semitic languages in a diachronic perspective,' to the *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*.
- **Prof Tania Notarius** submitted a paper titled, '144 peculiarities in the representation of the subjects,' for publication as a chapter in the *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar (The Oxford Grammar of Biblical Hebrew)*, edited by Geoffrey Khan, (with Ian Atkinson).
- **Prof Tania Notarius** submitted a paper titled, 'Middle voice in Ugaritic in historical view,' which was accepted for publication in *Brill's Journal of Afroasiatic Languages and Linguistics*.
- **Prof Tania Notarius** submitted a paper titled, 'Lexicon and grammar in the Aramaic land description Ostraca from Idumea,' which was accepted for publication in the *Journal of American Oriental Society* (forthcoming).
- **Prof Tania Notarius** submitted a paper titled, 'Loan-words in the language of archaic Biblical

Hebrew poetry: a case for Akkadisms,' submitted for Anette Månsson (ed.), *Change and Continuity in Semitic Languages and Texts: Studies in Honor of Prof. Mats Eskhult* (forthcoming in 2024).

- **Prof Tania Notarius** is anticipating a forthcoming publication titled, 'Every glance of their eyes – like a flame, two flames': the Ugaritic Gt ʔ-m-r 'see' in yītmr KTU 1.2 I 32 reconsidered,' in J.C.E. Watson et al. (eds.), *Interconnected Traditions: Semitic languages, literatures, cultures*. The submission was made with the Cambridge, Open Book Publishers.
- **Prof Tania Notarius** 2024 (forthcoming, with Yitzhaq Feder), 'Surely there is God in this place': Ugaritic ʔtt and Hebrew ʔiššeh reconsidered in light of Kirta's vow (KTU 1.14 IV 38),' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (2024).
- **Chau, Kevin**. 'Nature and brotherly nature in Gen 49:1-12' for a volume on *Nature Imagery and Environmental Ethics*; co-editing this volume with Dr Johannes Ro. (in preparation).
- **Hawley, Lance, Kevin Chau, Jonathan Kline**. *Hebrew Poetry Reader*. Hendrickson (Tyndale House). (in preparation).
- **Chau, Kevin**. 'Metaphor' in *Cognitive Linguistics for Biblical Studies: An Introduction*. Resources for Biblical Studies. Edited by Beth Currier, Nicole Tilford, et al., SBL Press. (submitted and in final editing phase).

Department of Afrikaans and Dutch, German and French

The Department of Afrikaans and Dutch, German and French took part in the following internationalisation activities:

- The collaboration between the French Section and Political Science is in its second year, with the focus on the Maghreb countries, and more specifically in 2024, on Tunisia. Students were introduced to Bourguibism, the Arab spring, Tunisian extremism, and the shared history, culture, and literature of France and Tunisia. Whether their future career path is in the diplomatic corps, academia, or commerce, an international foundation has been laid. **Prof Morgan** travelled to Tunisia to prepare the contents of this module.
- **Dr Mathilda Smit** delivered a paper at the Suider-Afrikaanse Vereniging vir Neerlandistiek (SAVN) conference in Windhoek, Namibia, in July 2024. "Dis mooi man, Jan van Riebeeck rap nou saam die Khoisan" – Rap as transnasionale podium-

fenomeen? 'n Ondersoek na die wisselwerking tussen Suid-Afrika en die Lae lande, deur te kyk na die gevallestudie van Jack Parow en De Kraaien.'

Department of Art History and Image Studies

PCA International Book Award winner

Prof Martin Rossouw was the co-recipient of the Popular Culture Association (PCA) award, 'Best Edited Collection in Popular and American Culture', for *What Film Is Good For: On the Values of Spectatorship* (University of California Press, 2023), co-edited with Julian Hanich (University of Groningen). Presented at the annual Popular Culture Association Conference in Chicago on 29 March 2024.

Popular Culture Association recognitions page: <https://pcaaca.org/page/Recognitions>

Topical co-publication in IBSS-accredited international journal

In June 2024, **Prof Suzanne Human** co-published an article on land art and translation with **Dr Adelheid von Maltitz** in the IBSS and Scopus-accredited Taylor & Francis journal, *Critical Arts*. Full details: *De Villiers-Human, ES & Von Maltitz A. 2024. 'Adelheid Frackiewicz: landart, mourning, and translation' (Pre-print): 1-13.*

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02560046.2024.2346855>

Guest editorship: special issue of Critical Arts

Prof Martin Rossouw continued his work as guest editor for a special edition of the journal *Critical Arts*. The issue deals with translation, interdisciplinarity, and the arts, and was inspired by an international conference that our department co-hosted with the Department of Linguistics and Language Practice in December 2022. *Critical Arts* – an IBSS and Scopus-accredited journal – offers a widely recognised international platform for the scholars involved to showcase their work. Work on the special issue is currently in progress and is expected to be published by August 2024.

Staff involvement on international editorial boards

- **Prof Martin Rossouw** continued his work as editor of Brill's *Contemporary Cinema*, a book series that focuses on screen productions since the turn of the millennium to chart the rapidly unfolding landscape of the moving image. The rest



of the editorial board: Jaimie Baron (University of Alberta, Canada), Maryann Erigha (University of Georgia, GA, USA), Cynthia Felando, (University of California, Santa Barbara, CA, USA), Mark Jancovich (University of East Anglia, UK), Seung-hoon Jeong (California State University Long Beach, CA, USA), Kathleen Looock (Leibniz University Hannover, Germany), Tiago de Luca (University of Warwick, UK), Ernest Mathijs (University of British Columbia, Canada), Sheila J. Nayar (University of Utah, UT, USA), Iain Robert Smith (King's College London, UK), Christina Stojanova (University of Regina, Canada), Aaron Taylor (University of Lethbridge, Canada), Catherine Wheatley (King's College London, UK), Dan Yacavone (University of Edinburgh, UK). For more information: <https://brill.com/view/serial/COCI?contents=about>

- **Prof Rossouw** also continued his active involvement as an editorial board member of *Short Film Studies*, currently the sole international journal dedicated to the study of the historical importance and increasing contemporary prominence of short films. For more information: <https://www.intellectbooks.com/short-film-studies>
- **Prof Rossouw** continued his work as the guest editor for a special edition of the journal *Critical Arts*. The issue deals with translation, interdisciplinarity, and the arts, and was inspired by an international conference that our department co-hosted with the Department of Linguistics and Language Practice in December 2022. *Critical Arts* – an IBSS and Scopus-accredited journal – offers a widely recognised international platform for the scholars involved to showcase their work. The current date of publication is August 2024.

International conference invitations and participations by members of the abovementioned department:

- **Prof Martin Rossouw** was part of an interdisciplinary research team that co-authored a poster titled 'Sub-Antarctic Island chronicles: from huts to bytes.' The team included **Marike Stander** (UFS), **Elizabeth M Rudolph** (UFS), Anne M Treasure (UCT), Charne Lavery (UP), and Ria Olivier (SCAR), with Elizabeth M Rudolph presenting the poster in person. (19 to 23 August 2024).
- **Prof Rossouw** was invited to form part of the jury for the Film7Days project, which was held in Kazan, Tatarstan from 30 August until 5 September

2025. This international competition, known as the International Jury in the BRICS Film Initiative, featured 10 teams from BRICS countries, each tasked with creating a short fiction film within a strict seven-day timeframe.

- **Prof Suzanne Human** was invited to present a paper at the 18th Annual Society for Ricoeur Studies Conference, held from 24 to 27 October 2024 at the University of Chicago Divinity School in Chicago, Illinois, USA. Her paper was titled, "Ambiguous history" as 'recapitulation': figuring the sacred and South African depictions of the land,' with the theme of the conference *Imagination and Metaphor: Paul Ricoeur at Chicago, 50th Anniversary*.

Department of Governance and Political Transformation

Prof Arno Tausch delivered a paper, 'Tausch on Terrorism', at the below paper and online book launch

'Tausch on Terrorism,' a paper produced and delivered during the online launch of the book *Development, Globalization, Global Values and Security: Essays in Honor of Arno Tausch* (Springer, 2023) edited by Glen Segell. This online book launch was co-hosted by the Ezri Centre for Iran and Persian Gulf Studies Research, University of Haifa, and the Department of Political Studies and Governance, University of the Free State. 11 January 2024.

Department of Sociology

Prof Sethulego Matebesi

Research project on the Jagersfontein tailings dam failure with the Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining, University of Queensland, Australia. February-August 2024.

Dr Josh Platzky Miller:

- Research partnership with **Lea Cantor** (Cambridge, UK)
 - a. Co-authoring a monograph (in process)
 - b. Co-editing an edited volume (proposal under review, Oxford University Press)
 - c. Co-editing a journal special issue (proposal under review, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*).

Dr Josh Platzky Miller further published the following with Antje Daniel (Vienna, Austria), who was a second author:

- 2024. "Must Fall" movements globally: transnational flows of South African student activism'. *Third World Quarterly*, 46(1): 1-19.
- 2024. 'Imagination, decolonisation, and intersectionality: the #RhodesMustFall student occupations in Cape Town, South Africa'. *Social Movement Studies* 23 (4): 495-516.

Department of History

Guest editorship: special issue of Critical Arts

The co-publication of a chapter with **Prof Chitja Twala** (first author) titled, 'Of paqama gates and paqama scouts: the inner workings of regulated illegal and irregular border crossing between Lesotho and South Africa', was also a part of book project with Michigan State University, *Migration and the role of borders in the Making of Southern Africa* published by Lexington Press in early 2024. Book launch: 22 May 2024.

Members of the UFS Department of History awarded a British Academy Grant

Dr Victor Gwande from the UFS Department of History, together with **Dr Ushehweku Kufakurinani** (University of Sussex, UK) and **Dr Godfrey Hove** (National University of Lesotho), won a British Academy Grant to undertake a Writing and Publication Workshop for Early Career Scholars in Southern Africa.

Department of Criminology

Dr Matthew Cronjé collaborated with Arden University

Dr Cronjé has initiated a research project with Arden University in the UK: 'A comparative analysis of post-release experiences of ex-offenders in the UK and South Africa'. Project started and is in the proposal phase with colleagues from Arden University. He received funding for a research visit to the UK in January 2025.

First International Conference on Criminology and Criminal Justice

Dr Cronjé presented a paper titled, 'A strength-based approach to community cohesion: reflections from community dialogue circles in Alexandra, Johannesburg' at the first International Conference on Criminology and Criminal Justice, Gangodawila, Sri Lanka, 3-4 October. **Dr Cronjé** also served as chair of various sessions during the conference.

Ashwill Phillips 13th International Conference on Victim Assistance

- **Ashwill Phillips** attended the 13th International Conference on Victim Assistance hosted by O.P. Jindal Global University in Sonipat, India, 11-12 November 2024.
- **Phillips further** submitted a research paper to the journal *Cogent Social Sciences* and the paper is currently under review.

First International Conference on Criminology and Criminal Justice

Prof Francois Steyn, Head of Department, presented a paper titled, 'Informal foodways and food preparation in a South African female prison' at the first International Conference on Criminology and Criminal Justice, hosted in Gangodawila, Sri Lanka from 3 to 4 October 2024. During this conference, **Prof Steyn** also chaired various sessions.

International research activities of which Prof Robert Peacock was a part:

- **Prof Robert Peacock** has been collaborating with the Basque Institute of Criminology in the Basque Country, Spain, in the Laboratorio de teoría y práctica de la justicia restaurativa, a project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, with the project title *Restorative justice for crimes against the environment and against animals: Design of prevention, intervention and reparation programs within a globalised framework*.
- **Prof Peacock** also collaborated with researchers from India, Spain, and Australia to present joint research at the 18th World Society of Victimology Symposium (Gandhinagar: 1-5 September 2024) on 'A global perspective on challenges in teaching and research on green victimology'. During this conference, **Prof Peacock** further presented the

valedictory address at this prestigious conference, in addition to serving as a session chair during this conference.

13th International Conference on Victim Assistance

Prof Robert Peacock served on the expert panel of the 13th International Conference on Victim Assistance (11-12 November 2024) organised by O.P. Jindal Global University, Delhi, India. Furthermore, Prof Peacock presented a paper on 'Reclaiming agency: decolonising victim assistance through a critical emancipatory framework' during this conference.

Odeion School of Music

Several academic internationalisation activities were undertaken by various academics in the UFS Odeion School of Music:

- **Dr Marc Rontsch** delivered a keynote online address during the '(In)visible Publics: Performing (non-)belongings' Conference at University College Dublin, 13 September.
- **Dr Anchen Froneman** is Editor-in-Chief of an upcoming eBook, *Shaping Southern Shifts: Provocations in/through LBMS*, with co-editors **Prof M Heleen Coetzee** (UP Department of Drama), **Prof N Prakash** (Assistant Clinical Professor, Department of Creative Arts Therapies, College of Nursing and Health Professions, Drexel University, USA), and **Prof SO Emoghene** (Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance, the University of Texas at Austin, USA). Abstracts have been accepted and include authors from the USA, Brazil, China, and South Africa.
- **Dr A Froneman** is collaborating with **Robert Ek** and **Federico Visi** from the Luleå University of Technology / Piteå School of Music, Sweden, to finalise an article titled 'Inner intentions, real-time

detection of Laban efforts in music performance' using AI, following abstract acceptance for a special edition on Embodied Perspectives on Sound and Music AI for the Human-Media Interaction Section, *Frontiers in Computer Science*.

- Track recorded by **Prof D Strydom**: 'Wade through water' on the album released by composer Andile Khumalo, *Tracing hollow traces*. This was an international release by USA label – New Focus.
- **Dr S Strauss** submitted a proposal for a book chapter that was accepted for publication in an interdisciplinary book with international authors (*Extremity and the Future: Imagining Lives to Come*; edited by Nelson Varas-Díaz & Daniel Nevárez Araújo). **Dr S Strauss** also collaborated with **Prof D Cockrell** (Vanderbilt; UFS Research Fellow) for an article on country music in a special edition of the USA journal *American Music*.
- **Dr S Strauss**: Nominated to present a paper at the International Association of Music Libraries Conference 2024 on behalf of the South African branch of Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale. Presented the paper in June 2024.

LJ Phillip was involved in various creative musical works with other international stakeholders and academics:

- **Communion service 'Fiat lux'**: This project entailed musical composition by **LJ Phillip**. This piece, a liturgical setting of the Anglican communion service, is scored for choir and organ, and was composed in 2021. The composition consisted of two movements, namely Kyrie eleison, Sanctus, Agnus Dei, Gloria in excelsis.
- On 8 September 2024, two movements (the Agnus Dei and Gloria in excelsis) were sung in a church service at the Harvard Memorial Chapel, Harvard University in the United States of America. The other two movements, the Kyrie eleison and Sanctus, remain unperformed.
- The two performed works were performed by the Harvard University Choir, with David von Behren as the organist and Edward Elwyn Jones as the conductor. The performances can be found under the following links: Gloria in excelsis and Agnus Dei.
- These recordings are authorised for use on Lance Phillip's YouTube channel by kind permission of the Provost and Chaplain of Harvard University.
- **Quinque prudentes virgines**: This piece, a setting

of the Communion proper for 10 November 2024, was commissioned by Capellmeister **Ricardo Luna** for performance at the Communion in the High Mass in St Peter's Roman Catholic Church, Vienna. It was commissioned on 19 October 2024 and composed in five days, from 19 to 23 October.

- This brief work sets the prescribed text for that Sunday in the Roman Catholic liturgical calendar. The Capellmeister specified the musical forces (two tenors, baritone, and organ), style (formal, High Catholic polyphonic style in the Viennese tradition), standard of difficulty (learnable by professional singers within a single rehearsal), and approximate duration (between three and five minutes).
- The composition premiered at the High Mass in St Peter's Roman Catholic Church, Vienna (1733) (Peterskirche, Wien), Archdiocese of Vienna in Austria on 10 November 2024. Performers were Armonia Vocale Wien; Ewa Homberg as the organist; and Ricardo Alejandro Luna as the conductor.
- These recordings are authorised for use on Lance Phillip's YouTube channel by kind permission of the clergy of the Peterskirche, Wien. The performance can be found on the following link: *Quinque prudentes virgines*.
- **Notre Père project**: This project, spearheaded by **LJ Phillip**, entailed the recording of conducting the composition of the creative work titled: *Notre Père project*.
- In 2024, the Frank Martin Society invited choirs around the world to mark International Peace Day with an act of solidarity. On 21 September, musicians of all nationalities performed Frank Martin's setting of the Lord's Prayer, from his oratorio *In terra pax*. The Swiss-Dutch composer wrote the work in 1944 for performance upon the declaration of peace after World War II. Universal Edition made the score available to all participating choirs. This event thus commemorates 50 years since Martin's death, as well as the 80th anniversary of this oratorio. The Cathedral Singers of St Andrew and St Michael (Bloemfontein, South Africa) are proud to contribute this recording to the Frank Martin Society.
- This project was supported by the music publisher Universal Edition, Vienna (Austria), and by UNESCO (Netherlands Commission).
- The recording was the first in the world to be made



and submitted; it was hosted on **Lance Phillip's** YouTube channel and promoted from the webpage of the **Frank Martin Society**.

- The Cathedral Singers of St Andrew and St Michael, Bloemfontein, is a liturgical choir affiliated to the Bloemfontein Anglican Cathedral. I have been conducting this choir since 2009. **L Snyman** from the Odeion School of Music was the recording engineer.
- The recording and performance can be found on the following links:
- YouTube video performance.
- These recordings are authorised for use on Lance Phillip's YouTube channel by kind permission of Universal Edition, Vienna.

INCOMING AND OUTGOING INTERNATIONAL STAFF EXCHANGES

This category showcases activities relating to incoming international staff hosted; outgoing international staff exchange other than conference and workshop attendance.

Centre for Gender and Africa Studies

Prof S Cawood

Prof S Cawood was the institutional host for **Prof J Grider** (University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, USA), whose visit to South Africa was to conduct research while on a Fulbright US Scholar Grant from February to July 2024.

Dr Nadine Lake collaborated with American academics

Hosted transgender activists and educators Jessica Lynn and Debi Jackson from the USA in April 2024.

Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship (Appalachian State University)

Dr G Magaiza from the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies on the UFS Qwaqwa Campus hosted **Prof J Lutabingwa** from 8 June to 15 August 2024, following a successful grant from the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship. **Prof Lutabingwa** is from Appalachian State University in North Carolina.

Mdme Bineta Diop (conference hosted by Prof H Hudson)

Prof Heidi Hudson initiated/hosted Mdme Bineta Diop, AUC Special Envoy on Women, Peace and

Security (awarded honorary doctorate in Africa Studies on 9 Dec 2024), Dr Mends-Cole, and Fall Venn Danfakha, 8-9 December 2024 (also from AU).

Department of Hebrew

Prof CL Miller-Naudé and Prof JA Naudé exchange to the USA

Prof CL Miller-Naudé and **Prof JA Naudé** were on a staff exchange to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Memorial Library (USA) for research purposes from 1 to 12 July 2024.

Department of Afrikaans and Dutch, German and French

Prof Angelique van Niekerk acted as host for the guest lecturer who visited the Department of Afrikaans and Dutch, German and French, UFS

For a period of six weeks in August and September 2024, **Prof Angelique van Niekerk** acted as host for the guest lecturer who visited the Department of Afrikaans and Dutch, German and French at the UFS. This project was financially supported by the Dutch Language Union in collaboration with the SAVN (Society for Dutch in Southern Africa). Visitor: Dr Ekaterina Tereshko.

Dr Albertus Barkhuizen presented two workshops at the Francophonie Summer University in Nice, France

Dr Albertus Barkhuizen was invited to teach two workshops at the Francophonie Summer University in Nice, France, from 1 to 13 July 2024.

The first workshop focused on the use of subtitle creation as a creative language learning project to promote interculturality in the French foreign language classroom. The second workshop was a language course taught to French teachers from Uzbekistan with the goal of improving their French language skills and equipping them with tools for continued further learning. As part of the initiative, Dr Barkhuizen gave a guest lecture on the use of translanguaging in the foreign language classroom.

Department of Art History and Image Studies

Incoming exchange hosted by the UFS Department of Art History and Image Studies

Prof Annie van den Oever continued her consultation

and collaboration with us in her capacity as extraordinary professor in our department. This year, she visited the UFS from 16 to 21 February 2024; her stay included guest lectures, postgraduate supervision, and liaison with key stakeholders at our university. **Prof Van den Oever** is an Associate Professor of Film in the Department of Arts, Culture, and Media at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, research associate at the Institut ACTE, Cinéma et Audiovisuelle, Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne, founding editor of the Amsterdam University Press academic book series *The Key Debates*, founding editor of *Necsus: European Journal of Media Studies*, editorial board member of *Image and Text*, and adviser to the Dalkey Archive Press.

Josef van Wyk pursuing PhD with the University of Groningen

Josef van Wyk continued his PhD studies as a formally enrolled student in the Graduate School of the Humanities, University of Groningen (the Netherlands), as part of a joint PhD agreement with the University of the Free State. However, he did not physically travel to Groningen in the first semester of 2024. The anticipated date of completion is yet to be shared.

Department of English

Prof Susan Brokensha alongside Prof Hoffmann, principal investigators, after receiving a research grant

Prof Hoffmann from the Georgia Institute of Technology, USA, collaborated as a principal investigator on a research grant with the working title: 'AI Support for Collaboration on Wicked Problems (AI4WP)'.

Together with **Prof Elmarie Kotzé** and **Dr Burgert Senekal**, these academics were awarded a UFS

interdisciplinary Research Grant in August 2024. The title of their study was: 'Automating the assessment of English essays using network science and AI'.

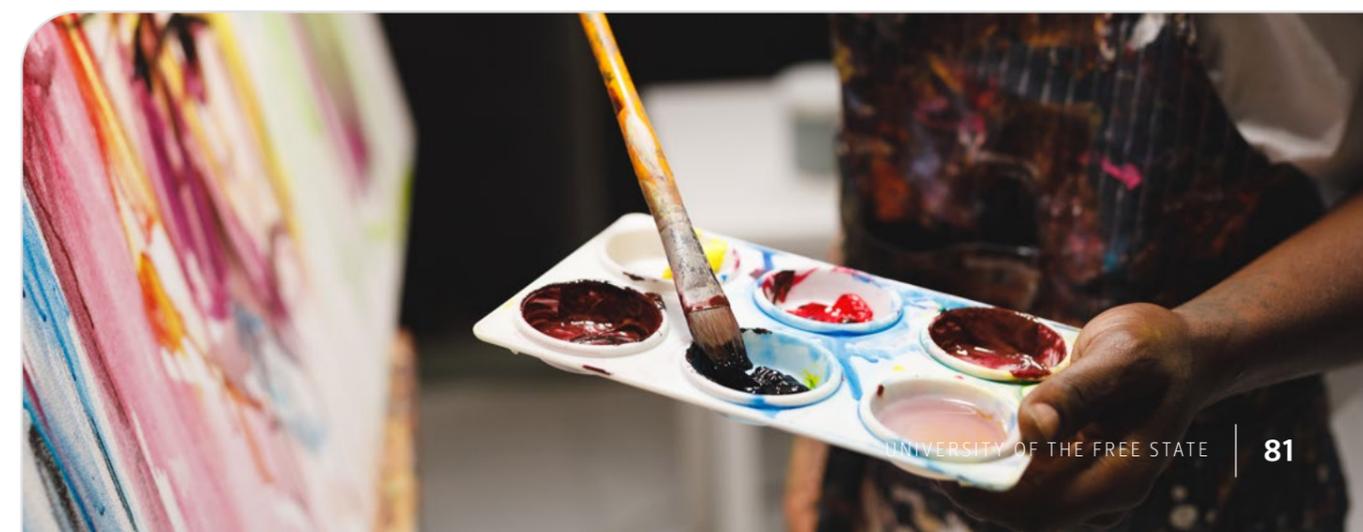
Citation: Brokensha, S, De Wet, K, Combrink, H, Redelinghuys, N, Matloko, K and Scheltema-Van Wyk, C. Forthcoming. *Developing an Open Educational Resource (OER) for Generative AI in Higher Education. Praxis.*

Peter Moopi: paper presentation at the International Qwaqwa Interdisciplinary Conference 2024

Peter Moopi presented a paper at the International Qwaqwa Interdisciplinary Conference of 2024 titled: 'Democratisation and contested decolonial pathways/trajectories in post-1994 South Africa: the case of Rehana Rossouw's New Times'. The conference took place in November 2024 on the University of the Free State (UFS) Qwaqwa Campus in South Africa.

International publications, presentations, and panel participations by Prof Helene Strauss from the UFS Department of English

- **Strauss, H**, Arseneault, D'Adamo and Wright, HK. 2016. 'Contemporary Orientations in African Cultural Studies'. Co-authored with Jesse Arseneault, Sarah D'Adamo, and Handel Kashope Wright (2016). Reprinted in October 2024 in *An Anthology of African Cultural Studies, Volume II: Directions*. Eds. Keyan Tomaselli and Handel Kashope Wright. London and New York: Routledge. Available at <https://mcmaster.academia.edu/SarahDAdamo>
- **Strauss, H**. "Dangerous, Ugly Air": reckoning with atmospheric and photosynthetic injustice in Dying for Gold.' *Ruptured Commons*. Eds. Veronica Austen and Anna Guttman. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, November 2024. 159-179.



- **Strauss, H.** Invited contribution to forum on 'Refugee Pedagogies.' Special Issue of *Canadian Literature* on the topic 'Swirling into the Field of Life: Works in Conversation with Y-Dang Troeung,' edited by Christopher Patterson and Vinh Nguyen. Forthcoming, 2025.
- **Strauss, H.** 'Reckoning, repairing, reworlding: the (in)humanities, artistic practices, and planetary crisis (Guest Editors' Introduction).' Co-authored with Susan Spearey, Susie O'Brien, Tayah Clarke, and Jesse Arseneault. *Studies in Social Justice* 18.4 (2024): 658-680. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26522/ssj.v18i4.4853>
- **Strauss, H.** 'Reckoning, repairing, and reworlding as praxis (Editors' Outro).' Co-authored with Jesse Arseneault, Tayah Clarke, Linzey Corridon, Feisal Kirumira, Susie O'Brien, Jane Sewali-Kirumira, Susan Spearey, Nandini Thiyagarajan, and Andrea Vela-Alarcón. *Studies in Social Justice* 18.4 (2024): 1006-1022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26522/ssj.v18i4.4886>
- **Strauss, H.** 'Rebirth | Revolt | Resurrect – A conversation about Uhuru Phalafala's *Mine Mine Mine* (Creative Intervention).' With Uhuru Phalafala in *Studies in Social Justice* 18.4 (2024): 903-914. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26522/ssj.v18i4.4378>
- **Strauss, H.** Plenary Panel: 'Beyond the toxic university: towards connection, kinship, and care,' with the Reworlding Research Collective, Canadian Association for Postcolonial Studies (CAPS), June 2024, Montreal, Canada.
- **Strauss, H.** 'Tumbleweed.' Paper presented at the 2024 CAPS conference, Montreal, Canada.

International publications, presentations, and panel participations by Hanta Henning from the UFS Department of English

- **Henning, H.** 2024. 'Fact, fiction, infraction: popular culture, literature, and the adoption triad's narrative burden.' Paper presented at the Northeast Popular Culture Association 2024 Hybrid Conference, 3-5 October 2024 (Nichols College, Dudley, Massachusetts/ online).
- **Henning, H.** 2024. 'Archetype, phenotype, stereotype: the volksmoeder/domestic worker in selected South African novels.' Paper presented at the International Academic Forum (IAFOR) Barcelona Conference on Arts, Media and Culture (BAMC2024), 12-16 November 2024 (Barcelona, Spain/online).
- **Henning, H.** 2024. 'Reading South African

adoption narratives as sites of unburdening and affective liminality." Paper presented at the ninth Annual Siedlce Forum for Contemporary Issues in Language and Literature: Thresholds of liminality in literature, linguistics, philosophy and culture, 21-22 November 2024 (Siedlce University Institute of Linguistics and Literary Studies and University of the Balearic Islands Faculty of Philosophy and Art/online).

Department of Anthropology

Prof Owen participated and presented in the following international conferences:

- Liberatory Methods: Investigating and generating non-capitalist/anti-colonial social power (online workshop), March-May 2024.
- 'I am my mother's daughter', World Anthropological Union (WAU) Conference titled *Reimagining Anthropological Knowledge, Perspectives, Practices and Power*, Misty Hills, Johannesburg, South Africa from 11 to 15 November 2024.
- 'The 'culture isn't ready': narrating emergent realities in an African university' presented at ACUSAfrica Conference titled, *Leveraging Critical University Studies towards the Practical Pursuit of an Afrocentric University*, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda, from 16 to 19 October 2024.
- 'What's in a name? African resistance to Western categorisation', co-presented with Mamokoena Mokoena, VAD conference, Bayreuth, from 30 September to 2 October 2024.

Prof Williams took part in two international conferences, namely:

- *Archiving, Memory, and Methods from the Global South*, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda.
- Presented paper titled 'National liberation and archival ethnography: working with the AilongaCollection' (October 2024).
- African Studies Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, USA. Presented paper titled 'Faith and liberation in Tanzania: an historical ethnography of Salatiel Ailonga's Bible' (December 2024).

INTERNATIONALISATION OF LEARNING AND TEACHING, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

This category is concerned with new collaborative degrees, virtual exchanges including COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning),

student incoming and outgoing exchanges, and other significant developments relating to internationalisation of learning and teaching.

Centre of Gender and Africa Studies

PhD co-supervision by Prof Pamila Gupta from the UFS Centre for Gender and Africa Studies

- **Prof Gupta** was one of four PhD supervisors of Amina Kaskar, 'Soft architecture: Afro-Indian spatial strategies under hard migrations'; written report and participated in online PhD defence, 31 May 2024. Amina Kaskar obtained her master's degree from the University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa) and KU Leuven (Belgium).
- **Prof Gupta** continued supervising (since 2020) Dale Meneses, PhD candidate, *Laborers, rice, and coconuts: Global commerce in Western India, 1500-1800*, Department of History, Georgetown University, Washington DC.
- Co-supervisor for Lisandra Franco de Mendonca's application: 'A State Zero Hour: an architectural ethnography of Mozambique's independence' for ERC Horizon Europe Framework Programme, August 2024.
- Book MS workshop, 'Aural City: sensory politics in the making of Gulu (Uganda)', Dr Joella Bitter, Assistant Professor, Eastman School of Music/ Department of Anthropology, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY. 11 October 2024.

Collaborations and publications by Dr Juliet Kamwendo

- Collaborated with Prof Grider, who visited the centre in March 2024 from the USA to teach Feminist Research Methodology to honours and master's students in Gender Studies during the first contact session from 26 February to 1 March.
- Published a newspaper article in *Bloemfontein Courant*. 'Climate change: Project prioritises gender mainstreaming', which appeared in the newspaper of 18 April 2024.

Department of Anthropology

From the UFS Department of Anthropology, some notable activities that took place:

In October 2024, **Prof Christian Williams** participated in a conference on *Archive, Memory, and Method* at Makerere University in Uganda. Thereafter, the Dean of Makerere's Faculty of Humanities identified several South African delegates as potential collaborators for

future work on the conference theme. Since then, colleagues at Makerere's Department of History, the UFS Department of Anthropology, and Prof Williams have begun to develop a framework for a joint postgraduate programme in Heritage Studies and Archival Ethnography.

In 2025, the department expects to develop a curriculum in conversation with the relevant stakeholders, and to create opportunities for UFS and Makerere postgraduate students to begin interacting online. From next year, we hope to initiate the programme, which would ideally enable the exchange of students and staff between our universities and result in a co-bachelor's degree for the department's honours students.

Department of Hebrew

International Engaged Scholarship activities:

- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé**, co-chair of the steering committee of the Biblical Hebrew Language and Linguistics programme unit of the International Society of Biblical Literature, organised the 2024 annual meeting programme in Amsterdam (the Netherlands).
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** is a co-editor of the series *Linguistics Studies in Ancient West Semitic*, published by Pennsylvania State University Press (USA).
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** is a member of the editorial board of *The Bible Translator*.
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** is a member of the international advisory board of the *Journal of Translation Studies in Africa*.
- **Prof Cynthia Miller-Naudé** was a referee for articles submitted to *The Bible Translator* and the *Journal of Translation*.
- **Prof Jacobus Naudé** is a co-editor of the series *Linguistics Studies in Ancient West Semitic*, published by Pennsylvania State University Press (USA).
- **Prof Jacobus Naudé** is a member of the editorial board of *Handbook of Translation Studies*.
- **Prof Jacobus Naudé** is a member of the advisory board of *Handbook of Terminology*.
- **Prof Jacobus Naudé** is a member of the editorial board of *The Bible Translator*.

- **Prof Jacobus Naudé** is a member of the advisory board of the National Association of Professors of Hebrew (USA).
- **Prof Tania Notarius** is a member of the advisory board meeting of the 'Edition des ugaritischen poetischen Textkorpus (EUPT)' in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Göttingen.
- **Prof Tania Notarius** applied to the Competitive Programme for Rated Researchers (CPRR) 2024/25 of the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa.
- **Prof Tania Notarius** serves as a Biblical Studies book review editor in *Hebrew Studies* (journal published by the National Association of Professors of Hebrew).
- **Dr Kevin Chau** is a steering committee member for the Biblical Hebrew Poetry section of the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting; helped organise forthcoming 2024 sessions.
- **Dr Kevin Chau** is a steering committee member for the Cognitive Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation section of the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting; helped organise forthcoming 2024 sessions.
- **Dr Kevin Chau** is co-chair of the Ethnic Chinese Biblical Colloquium (affiliate group) for the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting; helped organise the forthcoming 2024 meeting.
- **Dr Kevin Chau** serves as an instructor for Drama of Scripture (undergraduate/post-graduate) with Upper House (a Christian study centre serving the University of Wisconsin-Madison).

Department of Afrikaans and Dutch, German and French

Short learning programme enrolment of international students

The department offered a short learning programme (SLP) for Afrikaans as foreign language to, among others, visiting international students. Eight students from different countries, including Germany and other European countries, as well as students from Southern Africa, including Lesotho, were enrolled in the SLP from July 2024 for 13 weeks.

Enrolment of international students at the UFS for the SLP in Afrikaans (foreign language) takes place per semester in February and July.

Three (3) students from Namibia were enrolled in the SLP for Dutch in the first semester and two students

from Namibia participated in the international exam for Dutch at the UFS in May 2024.

Department of History

From the UFS Department of History, some notable activities that took place:

- **Prof Clement Masakure** was elected as a member of the Pan African Scientific Committee of the Encyclopaedia Africana Flagship Project of the African Union.
- **Dr Rebecca Swartz, with Prof Jared McDonald and Dr Sarah Emily Duff (Colby College, USA)**, hosted a workshop on children and youth in Southern African history, held at the UFS from 1 to 2 July 2024. The colleagues also collaborated on an edited collection on children and youth in Southern African history, following on the success of their workshop held at the UFS during the abovementioned period.

Department of Criminology

From the UFS Department of Criminology, some notable activities that took place:

- **Ashwill Phillips** presented a guest lecture titled *Rituals, Symbols and Identity: Exploring the Origin and Dynamics of Devil-Worshipping Youth Gangs and Occult Practices in the Free State, South Africa* in hybrid mode (online) at Arcadia University in the United States (Philadelphia) on 29 October 2024.
- As part of the themes presented in CRIM 6824, **Ashwill Phillips** and **Dr Matthew Cronjé** arranged for two separate international guest lectures presented by **R Charlton** (3 September 2024) and **Salima Murji** (10 September 2024) from Arden University in the United Kingdom (London). **Richard Charlton** presented a lecture related to his PhD study titled *Rhino poaching and the illegal wildlife trade: challenges and implications*. **Salima Murji** presented a lecture related to her PhD study titled *Child sexual abuse: an academic examination*.
- **Prof Robert Peacock** was invited as a visiting professor to the National Forensic Sciences University (Gujarat, India) to present on the topic of *Forensic Victimology* on occasion of the second *Indian Postgraduate course of Victimology, Victim Assistance and Criminal Justice* (27-31 August). A further session followed on the *Victimisation vulnerability of street-connected children*.

Odeion School of Music

Community engagement initiatives and recognitions by the UFS Odeion School of Music

- Second South African International Woodwind Competition.
- Hosted by the OSM under the leadership of **Prof Danré Strydom**.
- International participants, jury members, and conductor.
- Collaboration with international institutions such as the Mozarteum Orchestra (Austria) and the BalatonSax (Hungary).

Department of English

Prof Helene Strauss continued collaboration on 'Reworlding Research Collective'

Prof Helene Strauss from the UFS Department of English continues to work with the international *Reworlding Research Collective* to refine embodied pedagogy techniques in undergraduate classrooms. Chapter titled 'Breathing with trees: towards decolonial embodied learning', which theorises this work, is currently under review.

REPORTING ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

This category encompasses any highlights of efforts made by the UFS to recruit international students, align faculty enrolment plans with recruitment efforts, and any additional support that may have been rendered to students who apply for courses whose curriculum is strictly governed by professional bodies.

Centre for Health Systems Research and Development

International student recruitment for the Centre for Health Systems Research and Development

The UFS Centre for Health Systems Research & Development has enrolled three international students for the Master of Health Systems Studies programme. The students' home countries are New Zealand, Lesotho, and Congo (asylum seeker).

Department of Hebrew

- The Department of Hebrew has many international postgraduate students, coming from the following countries: Botswana, Cameroon, Canada, Ethiopia,

Germany, Ghana, Madagascar, Namibia, The Netherlands, Nigeria, UK, USA, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

- **Prof Tania Notarius** is a co-supervisor of the PhD research of Johan Ljungberg at Uppsala University (Sweden).

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

This category entails newly signed memorandums of understanding/agreement (MoUs and MoAs) in conjunction with staff and student mobility agreements, opportunities, and but not limited to joint degrees.





Centre for Gender and Africa Studies

Dr Munyaradzi Mushonga has been involved in forming the following partnership:

Working with the Decolonial International Network (DIN) as its Global Academic Director, establishing Decolonial chapters at various universities around the globe in order to grow the footprint of decolonial education.

Department of Afrikaans and Dutch, German and French

Partnership signing with Dutch Language Union through collaboration with Dr Glen Taylor

A partnership with the Dutch Language Union was signed in June 2024 via the office of **Dr Glen Taylor** in support of the visiting Dutch lecturer to the department in August-September 2024.

Department of Art History and Image Studies

Prof Martin Rossouw in discussions regarding the expansion of our current joint-PhD collaborations with the University of Groningen

In the second semester of 2024, **Prof Martin Rossouw** was in discussions with **Prof Annie van den Oever** (Department of Arts, Culture, and Media, University of Groningen), **Prof Mogomme Masoga** (UFS Dean: The Humanities), and **Prof Vasu Reddy** (UFS DVC: Research and Internationalisation) regarding the expansion of our current joint-PhD collaborations with the University of Groningen and (b) the further possibility of establishing a pipeline for talented postdoctoral candidates from Groningen to join the UFS as part of a MOU between the two institutions. Discussions and proposal development regarding this are still underway.

Department of Fine Arts

Erasmus+ staff mobility agreement

- The Department of Fine Arts entered into an Erasmus+ staff mobility agreement for teaching with the Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts Łódź.
- **Prof Janine Allen**, **Prof Adelheid von Maltitz**, **Lyrene-Kühn-Botma**, and **Johandi du Plessis-Kleynhans** exhibited in the *Echoes of Resilience* Group Exhibition hosted at the International Global Social Innovation Indaba, University of the Free State, 1-3 October 2024.

- **Johandi du Plessis-Kleynhans** was selected for the Ampersand Foundation Artist Residency and attended the residency in Tribeca, New York, 1 September-5 October 2024.
- **Prof Von Maltitz** was awarded the Ampersand Foundation (TAF) Fellowship and Artist Residency, and one artwork titled *Teething Field* (2024) was installed as part of the permanent collection at the Apartment in New York City.
- **Lyrene Kühn-Botma** visited the Netherlands after receiving the Sub-Saharan Africa Travel Grant from the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. A supervisor was identified to enable **Kühn-Botma** to enrol for a joint PhD degree between the University of the Free State and the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen – a top 100 university. **Prof Ann-Sophie Lehmann** from the Rijksuniversiteit accepted **Kühn-Botma** as an incoming PhD student. **Kühn-Botma** was introduced to academics at the Minerva Art Academy at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences. **Kühn-Botma** partnered with the stone lithography specialist, Marius Langerak, who invited her to work in the Lithography workshop. During her time at the Minerva Art Academy, **Kühn-Botma** made a series of polyester plate lithographs. **Kühn-Botma** has since applied to the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen's Graduate School for the Humanities and has been accepted as a PhD candidate. She will return to the Netherlands as part of the requirements for her joint degree and participate in any research or creative research opportunities.
- The Annual Richmond Land Art Project: Facilitated by **Dr Adelheid von Maltitz** and **Johandi du Plessis-Kleynhans** in 2024 and held at Modern Art Projects South Africa (MAPSA) in Richmond in the Karoo. The project also considered a mini artist residency for the students, where they respond to the site as well as psychosocial and economic issues related to Richmond and the Karoo. Initiated in 2013, the Department of Fine Arts of the UFS is the only art department in the country to have such a project. Invited international guest artists, **Magda Søbon** (Poland) and **MJ Blebo** (Ghana), and art historian **Prof Suzanne Human** (Art History and Image Studies, UFS) attended and engaged with the students in the project.
- **Prof Janine Allen's** series of artworks, *The Aura of Corona*, was accepted by the DHET as an international creative output.

- **Lyrene Kühn-Botma** presented online at the Encounters in Artistic Research conference held at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen in partnership with the Minerva Art Academy in the Netherlands, September 2024. The title of her monologue: *Artmaking, Working, and Working Through*.
- **Stethoscape**, in collaboration with the UFS Art Galleries, presented an International Talk with photographer and artist **Roger Palmer** from the University of Leeds.
- **Prof Magda Søbon** visited the department and presented a workshop, lecture, and critique sessions.
- **MJ Blebo** visited the department and presented a workshop, lecture, and critique sessions.
- The renowned artist **Ibrahim Mahama** visited the department and presented a lecture and critique sessions.

Department of Linguistics and Language Practice

The Department of Linguistics and Language Practice and the Department of Semiotics at the University of Tartu have an Erasmus exchange running from 2024 to 2026

This exchange, running from September 2023 to July 2026, offers the department opportunities to engage with colleagues from Tartu. **Prof Kalevi Kull** visited Bloemfontein for a week in June 2024 and presented a guest lecture. **Lani de Beer** spent a semester in Tartu as part of her MA studies. **Dr Xany Jansen van Vuuren** will visit Tartu for a two-week exchange in October 2025.

INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME

This category is concerned with activities that are aimed at the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments.

Centre for Gender and Africa Studies

Dr Munyaradzi Mushonga from the UFS Centre for Gender and Africa Studies participated in the following internationalisation at home activities:

- Attended, as a delegate/participant, the 10th Anniversary of the UNISA Decoloniality School

under the theme: *Reflection, Disruption, and Realisation of Decolonial Futures*, Pretoria, 15-19 Jan 2024.

- Participated in two meetings of the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) (17-19 April and 19-21 June 2024) in preparation of the forthcoming international OHASA Conference on *Forgotten Stories and Marginalised Experiences: Thirty Years Later*, 1-4 October 2024, Ulundi, KZN.
- Speaker at the UFS Library and Information Services Symposium (online), *Breaking New Ground: Carving a Decolonised Collection Path*, Wednesday 26 June 2024.
- Discussant for Dr Rudo Hwami's *Identity Construction as a Spatiotemporal Phenomenon within Doctoral Students' Intellectual and Academic Identities* presentation, South African Research Chair Initiative (SARChI) Chair in Higher Education and Human Development (HEHD), University of the Free State, 12 February 2024.

Department of Hebrew

Prof Tania Notarius attended the 2024 SASNES Virtual Seminar (hosted by the Department of Hebrew, University of the Free State)

In February, **Prof Tania Notarius** attended the 2024 Southern African Society for Near Eastern Studies (SASNES) Virtual Seminar (hosted by the Department of Hebrew, University of the Free State) and presented 'Land property in the Aramaic Ostraca from Second-Temple Period Idumea (fourth century BCE) in the Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Context'.

Department of Afrikaans and Dutch, German and French

TO NOTE:

The French Section is by nature international and intercultural, by dint of the contents of the literature and culture modules on French or Francophone authors. Our students and any other interested parties have a standing invitation to the monthly French film club with English subtitles. It is the most active club dedicated to French and Francophone films in the country.

Department of Sociology

Dr Josh Miller participated in the following activities:

Internationalisation in undergraduate (SOCP2624)

and honours (SOCP6808) teaching: Engagement with theoretical and empirical casework from Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, alongside Western Europe and North America. **Dr Miller also supported master's students to attend the German Study Abroad Programme.**

Department of English

Prof Susan Brokensha (lead) and in collaboration with the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)

A Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages approved by the NQF Qualifications Committee (H/HO6/AR150CAN) on 3 October 2024. Benchmarked against international universities, specifically the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) in the United States, and the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom.

Department of Fine Arts

Dr Adelheid von Maltitz took up a one-month Ampersand residency in New York during June 2024.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

This section aims to highlight any internationalisation activities that may not have been catered for, or suitable for the other previous categories.

Centre for Gender and Africa Studies

Africa Day Memorial Lecture hosted on the Qwaqwa Campus

The centre hosted an Africa Day Memorial Lecture on 22 May 2024, with keynote speaker Prof Ismail Rashid (Vassar College, USA). The theme of discussion was *Peacebuilding in Africa: Challenges, trends and futures*.

Dr Munyaradzi Mushonga

Speaker at the book launch, *Migration, Borders, and Borderlands: Making National Identity in Southern African Communities*, edited by M Mushonga, J Aerni-Flessner, C Twala & Grey Magaiza, UFS Qwaqwa Campus, 22 May 2024.

Prof Hussein Solomon

- Future Research and Expectations in Science, Knowledge and Aspirations*, co-hosted by the Independent University of Banja Luka, the Institute for African Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences,

and the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies at the University of the Free State. Bosnia-Herzegovina. 7 November 2024.

- This one-day conference formed part of the MoUs (Memorandums of Understanding) we have with the Institute for African Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Independent University of Banja Luka.
- 'BRICS Plus and climate change: searching for consensus,' paper presented to the Trends First Annual BRICS Think Tanks Summit, hosted by TRENDS Research & Advisory (Dubai). Kazan, Russia. 23 October 2024.
- During the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, an NGO Summit was held on the sidelines. CGAS represented South Africa and Prof Solomon presented the above-mentioned paper. Prof Solomon conducted these presentations virtually.
- During the first week of October, Prof Solomon visited India, where he presented the following papers at different Indian institutions:
 - 'The challenges of diplomacy in a conflict-prone world,' keynote paper presented to the conference *Diplomacy and Global Security on the Era of Conflicts*, hosted by the Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies. Faridabad, India. 7 October 2024.
 - 'India-Africa security cooperation: from state to human security,' paper presented to staff and students at Jamia Milla Islamia University. New Delhi, India. 4 October 2024.
 - 'Origins and trajectory of Islamist extremism in Africa,' paper presented to staff at the Vivekananda International Foundation. New Delhi, India. 4 October 2024.
 - 'Africa in the 21st Century: going beyond Western narratives,' keynote address at the Africa in the 21st Century Conference, hosted by the Centre for Africa Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. 3 October 2024.

Prof Hussein Solomon continues to hold the following positions at international level:

- Visiting Professor at the Osaka School of International Public Policy, Osaka University, Japan.
- Senior Research Fellow at the Jerusalem, Israel-based think tank – Research on Islam and Muslims

in Africa. Research Fellow at the Israel-Africa Relations Institute in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Department of Afrikaans and Dutch, German and French

Prof Lieve de Wachter of KUL (Belgium) was appointed as co-supervisor for a PhD student in the department in August 2024 (Supervisor: A van Niekerk, Student: A Church).

In January and June 2024, **Dr Albertus Barkhuizen** was requested by the French Embassy in South Africa to present online training sessions for three groups of French teachers in Botswana, France, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, and South Africa. At the end of the training, the attendees were able to sit for an examination that would qualify them to mark international French language proficiency exams.

Department of Sociology

Prof Sethulego Matebesi published the following:

Marais, L, Van der Watt, P, Matebesi, S, Cloete, J, Harris, J, Ern, MAL & Owen, JR. 2024. 'The catastrophic failure of the Jagersfontein tailings dam: an industrial disaster 150 years in the making.' *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 109(2024). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2024.104585>.

This was with the University of Queensland, Australia.

Dr Josh Platzky Miller presented in the following platforms:

- Presented at *Jornadas de Estudio y Reflexión sobre Movimientos Estudiantiles* conference (Buenos Aires, AR, 6-8 Sept 2023).
- Presented at *Free Decolonised Education in the Aftermath of Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall in South Africa* conference (HSRC/University of Cambridge, UK, 22-23 May 2023).
- Book proposal for *Agenda (UK)/Columbia University Press (US)*.
- Book proposal (University of Wisconsin-Madison, US).
- Journal of World Philosophies* (Indiana University Press, US).
- Trashumante: Revista Americana de Historia Social* (Universidad de Antioquia, CO). 🇨🇴



FACULTY OF LAW



Dean
Prof Serges Kamga



Faculty Internationalisation
Coordinator
Quinter Onyango

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH, PUBLICATIONS AND COLLABORATIONS

This category encompasses all activities related to international research, including conference attendances, conference presentations, hosting of international guests for research and academic purposes, and international academic collaborations.

Private Law

Dr Anthea September-Van Huffel participated in the following internationalisation research activities

The following new research collaborations, of which Dr A September-Van Huffel is a part, emerged as follows from the International Interdisciplinary Security of Land Tenure Biennial Conference:

- Law School, Anglia Ruskin University, England (Prof Robert Home)
- Faculty of Law, University of Ilorin, Nigeria (Vice-Chancellor: Prof Wahab Egbewole and Prof Azubike Ouora-Oguno)
- Stellenbosch University, Faculty of Law: Department of Private Law (Prof Juanita Pienaar).
- Faculty of Law, Imo State University, Nigeria (Vice-Chancellor: Prof Uchefula Ugonna Chukwumaeze, and Dr Ngozi Chuma Umeh).
- National University of Lesotho, UNDP Human Rights Research Chair (Prof Carol Ngang).
- Public Affairs Research Institute (Prof Mbongiseni Buthelezi).
- Exploring possible research partnership with the National Law School of India University (NLSIU) (Prof Mrinal Satish and Prof Kamala Sankaran).

Dr Anthea September-Van Huffel and Dr Marda Horn co-authorship

Dr September-Van Huffel and Dr Marda Horn's co-authored article titled 'A critical investigation

into public trusteeship and the new Expropriation Bill [B23-2020]' was published in the *Journal of Contemporary Roman-Dutch Law*. (JCRDL) 87. ISSN accredited journal 2024: 409-427.

Dr Jacques Matthee participated in the below internationalisation activities:

- **Dr Jacques Matthee** worked with **Dr Grey Stopforth** and other UFS colleagues on an application for the Erasmus Plus Virtual Exchanges Grant. The proposal aimed, among others, to foster collaboration between our institution, other national institutions, and international institutions. They have established a collaboration agreement with two EU institutions, one in Italy and one in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, they were unable to submit the grant application because the partner in the Netherlands had to withdraw due to internal processes. However, they have continued to work on the application and aim to submit it with the next round of applications.
- Together with **Dr Grey Stopforth**, **Dr Matthee** collaborated on establishing a relationship with colleagues at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS), the Netherlands, for the above grant. The colleagues visited AUAS from 17 to 22 July 2024.

Dr Tamanda Kamwendo achieved the following internationalisation accomplishments:

- New research collaboration with the EU-funded Disruptive Innovation in Medical Ethics (DIME) research group situated at Ghent University (Belgium). In May 2024, the research group focused on advancements in health-care technologies and how such innovations disrupt the traditional medical ethics. The lead researcher was **Prof Heidi Mertes**.
- **Dr Tamanda Kamwendo's** book chapter on 'COVID-19 Pandemic and the African Continental Free Trade Agreement: Fostering a more Robust Regional Trade Integration?' was accepted for publication and is set to be published on 3 December 2025 in the *Springer European Union* and its *Neighbours in a Globalized World* series.

The following are new research collaborations on the law of succession that Dr James Faber is a part of:

Prof Reinhard Zimmermann (Emeritus Director: Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law, Hamburg).



School of Financial Planning Law

Prof Prince Sarpong

- Member of the Equity and Inclusion Committee of the Financial Therapy Association (USA).
- Advisory Board member AI2030 (USA).

Public Law

The department achieved the below publications:

- **Prof Ian Benson:** IT Benson, 'Australia under the coercion of COVID-19 restrictions: can it ever be reasonable to ignore the facts?', in *Politics, Law & Religion in Times of COVID*, Jane F Adolphe, Fulvio di Blasi and Robert L Fastiggi (eds.), (En Route Books and Media LLC: St. Louis, 2024), 263–293.
- **Prof Ian Benson:** Iain T Benson and Jane Adolph, 'The Anglo-Saxon tradition and the rule of law', in Michał Gierycz and Piotr Mazurkiewicz (eds.), *Faces of the rule of law in Europe* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Robert-Bosch-Breite 10, 37079 Göttingen, Germany, an imprint of the Brill-Group (Koninklijke Brill BV, Leiden, the Netherlands; Brill USA Inc., Boston MA, USA; Brill Asia Pte Ltd, Singapore; Paderborn, Germany, Brill Österreich GmbH, Vienna, Austria).
- **Prof J van der Walt:** 'The fragility of liberal democracy faced with fascism and climate politics', in *Athena*, Vol. 4, 1(2024), 23–67.
- **Dr Albert Nell:** Chapter on 'Immunities and international criminal tribunals' in *Research Handbook on Jurisdiction and Immunities in International Law*, 2nd ed, Alexander Orakhelashvili (ed.), (Edward Elgar Publishers). Co-author is **Prof Robert Cryer** (posthumously) (forthcoming).

Free State Centre for Human Rights (FSCHR)

Committee membership of the Annual Right to Development in Africa Conference

Dr Gerard Kamdem Kamga remains a member of the organising committee of the annual Right to Development in Africa conference. The conference will be presented in Portugal in November 2024, and the FSCHR, through Dr Kamga, remains one of five partners in the project.

Mercantile Law

The department achieved the following publications:

- **Simbarashe Tavuyanago** published a paper titled, 'Assessing the investigative powers of the competition commission in merger regulation and challenges posed by the digital era: S.O.S Support Public Broadcasting Coalition & Others v South African Broadcasting Corporation (SOC) Limited & others [2018] ZACC 37 (co-authored)' in the *Obiter* law journal.
- **Simbarashe Tavuyanago** published a paper titled, 'Safeguarding consumers' socio-economic rights during COVID-19: Competition Commission v Babelegi Workwear and Industrial Supplies CC CRO03Apr20' in *Journal of African Law* (co-authored).
- **Dr Shelton Makore's** article titled, 'Shifting the paradigms of international agricultural trade subsidies regulation to advance the human right to food' was accepted for publication in the *African Journal of International and Comparative Law* (DHET-accredited) (co-authored).

INCOMING AND OUTGOING INTERNATIONAL STAFF EXCHANGES

This category showcases activities relating to incoming international staff hosted; outgoing international staff exchange other than conference and workshop attendance

Private Law

Dr Anthea September-Van Huffel

International conferences attended and papers delivered:

- International Interdisciplinary Security of Land Tenure Conference, which took place from 6 to 8 May 2024, hosted by the University of the Free State Faculty of Law. During this conference, they delivered a paper presentation titled: *Exploring the legal ramifications of conservation practices and private property on local communities and indigenous peoples' customary land tenure rights*.
- The 11th Annual International Conference of the Berkeley Centre on Comparative Equality and Anti-Discrimination, hosted by the National Law School of India University, held from 24 to 29 July 2024. During the conference, **Dr September-Van Huffel** delivered a paper presentation titled: *The*

effect of legal-political context on the equitable distribution of natural resource wealth in South Africa.

- **Dr Anthea September-Van Huffel** attended the Institute for Global Law and Policy, Harvard Law School Workshop in June 2024.

Dr Marda Horn and Dr James Faber

International conferences attended and papers delivered:

International Interdisciplinary Security of Land Tenure Conference, 6-8 May 2024, hosted by the University of the Free State Faculty of Law. The paper delivered during this conference was titled: *Spangenberg and Others v Engelbrecht NO and Another (Case no 717/21) [2023] ZASCA 100 (14 June 2023): finding a balance between potentially stretching a limited real right to its limits and the court making a will on behalf of the testator.*

Dr Tamanda Kamwendo

International conferences attended and papers delivered:

Delivered a presentation during the Oxford Global Health and Bioethics International Conference held from 8 to 10 July 2024 at the University of Oxford. The title of the presentation was, *The legal regulatory concerns regarding the use of AI for human genome editing.*

Dr Jacques Matthee

International conferences attended and papers delivered:

- **Dr Matthee** presented a poster titled, *A collaborative initiative for adopting ethical AI principles in law courses in South Africa and Sweden*, during the SASUF Sustainability Forum, which was hosted from 15 to 17 May 2024 as part of the South Africa Sweden University Forum (SASUF) Research and Innovation Week in southern Sweden. The poster was presented together with **Dr Grey Stopforth** from the UFS Department of Mercantile Law.
- Attended the International Legal Ethics Conference (ILEC) in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, from 17 to 19 July 2024.

Portia Senokoane

International conferences attended and papers delivered:

Paper titled, *Addressing the impact of climate change*

on health disparities in Africa through a community-centred approach based on ubuntu and precision public health, presented at the 21st International Union for Conservation of Nature Academy of Environmental Law (IUCN AEL) Annual Colloquium, July 2024, at the Gujarat National Law University, India.

Dr James Faber

International conferences attended and papers delivered:

Law of Succession Seminar hosted by the University of Cape Town, 19 March, Cape Town (South Africa): *In search of an intent doctrine in the law of wills: a South African perspective.*

Seventh International Conference on the Right to Development 2024, Lisbon, Portugal

Dr Jacques Mathee, Prof Elizabeth Snyman-Van Deventer, Dr Grey Stopforth, and Leani van Niekerk were part of a panel discussion at the Seventh International Conference on the Right to Development 2024, held from 6 to 8 November 2024 in Lisbon, Portugal. Title of the panel discussion was *Generative AI, Legal Education and the Right to Equitable Development in South Africa.*

School of Financial Planning Law

2024 Financial Therapy Association Conference

Paper presentation. Moderator of conference panel discussion.

Public Law

The following staff exchange activities took place in the department, some resulting in publications and presentations:

- The launch of the Africa Reparations Hub, together with the *Colloquium on Unifying Africa for Action to Advance Reparatory Justice*, took place on 6 June 2024. **Dr Catherine Namakula** and **Khanya Motshabi** chaired/moderated these events. Prof S Kamga delivered the welcoming and launch address. The keynote address was delivered by **Prof Verene Shepherd** (Director, Centre for Reparation Research, University of the West Indies, Jamaica). **Martin Masiga** (Secretary General, Africa Judges and Jurists Forum [AJJF]) and **Dr Ahmed Bugri** (senior expert and coordinator for Reparatory Justice and Racial Healing, African Union Commission) participated in the panel

discussion. **Prof Shaun de Freitas** did the vote of thanks and closure.

- **Dr Catherine Namakula** led the country visit to Colombia by the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent from 15 to 24 May 2024.
- **Dr Catherine Namakula** presented a paper titled, *On the jurisprudential legacy of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda*, at a conference on the 30th anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide, organised by the African Centre for Transnational Criminal Law, UWC, from 6 to 8 May 2024.
- **Dr Larisse Prinsen** presented a paper titled, *Precision P4 medicine, its associated legal challenges and the relevant South African regulatory framework*, at the Human Genome Organisation Human Genome Meeting, from 8 to 10 April 2024, at the Sapienza University of Rome, Italy.
- **Prof Mariette Reyneke** presented a paper at the Africa Federation of Teaching Regulatory Authorities Conference, which took place from 6 to 11 May 2024 in Lusaka, Zambia, in a plenary session on, *Promoting education law in Africa and the importance of establishing an African Education Law Association for enhancing quality education in Africa.*
- **Dr Catherine Namakula** attended a conference hosted by Lawyers of Africa, where she delivered a presentation titled, *Confronting the legacies of the past in reparative justice in Africa – legal pathways to address historical and contemporary violations*, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- **Prof Shaun de Freitas** delivered a paper at the International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies (ICLARS) Conference held at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, USA, on 22 October 2024. The title of his paper was, *Constitutional perspectives on a charter for religious rights and freedoms*, which dealt with a clause in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa that provides for parliamentary adoption of charters of rights.
- **Prof Shaun de Freitas** presented a paper titled, *The religious believer in a liberal democracy's public university and the limiting dimensions of propagation and conversion*, at the international Institute for the Study of Freedom of Religion or Belief (ISFORB) Conference, from 2 to 3 May 2024, at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium.

- **Prof Shaun de Freitas** served as a co-guest editor of a special issue (on religious freedom in Africa) of the *International Journal for Religious Freedom* (IJRF).

Free State Centre for Human Rights (FSCHR)

Tenth annual meeting of the International Socio-Economic Rights Project (ISERP) in Concepción, Chile

Prof Danie Brand participated in the 10th annual meeting of the International Socio-Economic Rights Project (ISERP) in Concepcion, Chile, in April 2024. The meeting was attended by participants from the USA, UK, Australia, Colombia, Argentina, Mexico, Canada, and India. Prof Brand established firm contacts with several colleagues from Chile, which will be concretised in future.

Dr Martie Bloem presented a paper at an international conference on legal ethics in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in July 2024

The Free State Centre for Human Rights has appointed two new postdoctoral fellows, Dr Shirley Genga from Kenya and Dr Elizabeth Achanca from Nigeria. They both commenced their fellowships in July 2024.

Mercantile Law

The department participated in the following international staff exchange activities:

- **Dr Shelton Makore** attended and presented a paper at the UFS International Conference on Disability Rights, held at the University of the Free State from 24 to 26 April 2024.
- **Dr Shelton Makore, Simbarashe Tavuyanago, and Dr Miklos Szirbik** participated in a collaborative seminar between the UFS Department of Mercantile Law and the Hungarian National University of Public Service, titled *Insights into the war in Ukraine, unipolarity, multipolarity, trade and geopolitics* held at the UFS on 14 March 2024.
- **Leani van Niekerk** presented a paper titled *Achieving equity in legal education* at the eighth International Conference on Advanced Research in Teaching and Education (ICATE) held in Prague, Czech Republic, from 8 to 10 March 2024.
- **Prof Denine Smit** delivered a paper on a toxic workplace at an international Asian (SLA Asia @25) conference arranged by **Dr Mahender Pratap Singh** from India, which was livestreamed on YouTube on 27 July 2024.



- **Dr Grey Stopforth** attended a conference on *The AI Act and its implications for the legal practice: A European Perspective* (ILEC 2024 Pre-Conference) on 16 July 2024 at the Amsterdam Law School.
- **Prof Elizabeth Snyman-Van Deventer** attended a workshop on Ethical Foundations of Legal Education and delivered a presentation titled *Current landscape of legal ethics in Africa – a town hall discussion* at Stathmore Law School, Nairobi, Kenya, held from 10 to 11 July 2024. On 11 July, she was also part of a panel discussion on *Designing effective legal ethics curricula: a pedagogical approach*, during the workshop.
- **Prof Elizabeth Snyman-Van Deventer, Dr Moolman, and Prof Denine Smit** attended the International Conference on Science, Engineering and Technology – ICSET 2024 in Pune, India, from 24 to 25 June 2024. **Prof Elizabeth Snyman-Van Deventer** delivered a paper presentation titled, *Contextualising human rights responsibilities in respect of transnational corporations' conduct*, at the same conference. They also attended a conference in India at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, where they visited the Maharaja Sayajirao Patel Institute of Management Studies.
- The UFS Moot Court team, consisting of four students, attended the Fourth Edition IT Law Moot Court Competition on 8 August 2024 at the British University in Egypt.
- The following academics presented papers at the Seventh International Conference on the Right to Development, held in Lisbon, Portugal, from 6 to 8 November 2024: **Prof Elizabeth Snyman-Van Deventer, Leani van Niekerk, Grey Stopforth, Bella Phore, and Dr Vongai Chimeri.**
- **Dr Shelton Makore** attended and presented an online paper at the Fourth Annual International Conference on Corporate and Financial Markets Law (CFML), held at the University of Botswana from 6 to 8 November 2024.
- From 20 to 22 November, the Department of Mercantile Law hosted the Ninth Annual International Mercantile Law Conference, with keynote addresses delivered by **Dr Edwini Kessie**, Director of Agriculture and Commodities at the World Trade Organisation; **Chaeli Mycroft**, co-founder of the Chaeli Campaign, a social justice organisation that advocates for disability inclusion; **Sheri Brynard**, the only qualified teacher with Down syndrome in South Africa; **Prof Lizelle**

Jacobs, an associate professor at the University of Technology Sydney Faculty of Law, Australia; and **Louzanne Coetzee**, a three-time Paralympic athlete.

INTERNATIONALISATION OF LEARNING AND TEACHING, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

This category is concerned with new collaborative degrees, virtual exchanges, including COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning), student incoming and outgoing exchanges, and other significant developments relating to internationalisation of learning and teaching.

Private Law

Dr Anthea September-Van Huffel participated in the following internationalisation of learning and teaching activities:

Centre for Research on Evaluation Science and Technology: Certificate in Training Supervisors of Doctoral Candidates at African Universities.

Public Law

Khanya Motshabi participated in the following internationalisation of learning and teaching activities:

Khanya Motshabi hosted **Dr Marianne Severin** and **Prof Serges Kamga** on 30 April 2024, co-leading the *Advanced Constitutional Law (LACN4810)* seminar. Dr Severin's guest seminar was on *Electoral maturity, civil society and prospects for democracy in South Africa in that session.*

Mercantile Law

Ntando Ncamane participated in the following internationalisation of learning and teaching activities:

Ntando Ncamane has been appointed as an external editor for the journal, *South African Yearbook of International Law.*

Simbarashe Tavuyanago participated in the following internationalisation of learning and teaching activities:

Simbarashe Tavuyanago has been appointed as an external editor for the journal, *South African Yearbook of International Law.*

Dr Shelton Makore participated in the following internationalisation of learning and teaching activities:

Dr Shelton Makore has been appointed as an external associate editor for the journal, *South African Yearbook of International Law.*

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

This category entails newly signed memorandum of understandings/agreements (MoUs and MoAs) in conjunction with staff and student mobility agreements, opportunities, but not limited to joint degrees.

Private Law

Dr Anthea September-Van Huffel participated in the following internationalisation of learning and teaching activities:

Dr Anthea September-Van Huffel has established a new partnership with the Faculty of Law at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

School of Financial Planning Law

The department was involved in the following collaborations and partnerships:

- The School of Financial Planning Law collaborated with STANLIB Lesotho for the fifth STANLIB Lesotho and UFS Financial Planning seminar. The event took place on 10 October 2024 in Maseru, Lesotho. **Hendan Kleingeld** presented on estate planning, and **Lebo Moshe-Bereng** presented on financial wellness.
- **Prof Liezel Alsemgeest** delivered a presentation at the annual UFS International Mercantile Law Conference, titled *Artificial intelligence (AI) in undergraduate law education: a scoping review.*

- **Henda Kleingeld** presented at the annual UFS Mercantile Law Conference. The title of her presentation was *Exploring online examination security in tertiary institutions: barriers and solutions for postgraduate distance learners in developing nations, focusing on South Africa.*

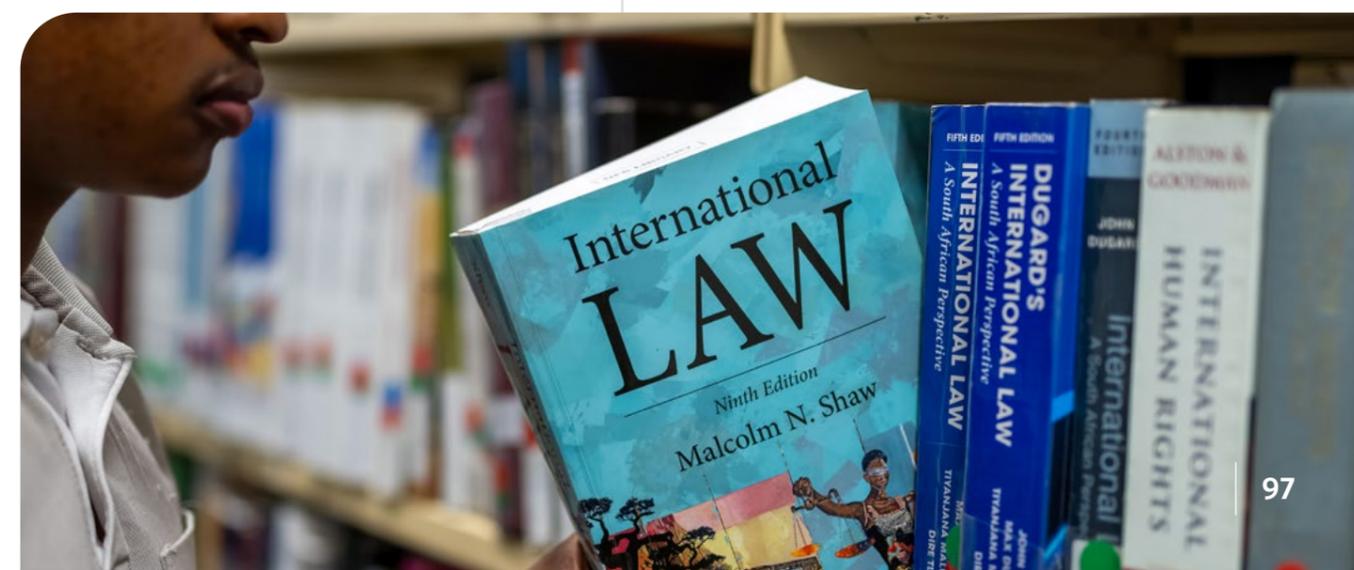
GENERAL ACTIVITIES

This section aims to highlight any internationalisation activities that may not have been catered for, or suitable for the previous categories.

Free State Centre for Human Rights

The department achieved and participated in the following general internationalisation activities:

- The centre has appointed two new postdoctoral fellows, **Dr Shirley Genga** from Kenya and **Dr Elizabeth Achancha** from Nigeria. They both commenced their fellowships in July 2024.
- **Dr Gerard Kamga** remains a member of the organising committee of the annual Right to Development in Africa conference. The conference was presented in Portugal in November 2024. The Free State Centre for Human Rights (FSCHR), through **Dr Kamga**, remains one of five partners in the project.
- The centre, in conjunction with several South African and international partners, presented the seventh annual Right to Development in Africa Conference in Lisbon, Portugal. Several staff members of the centre, and more broadly – the faculty – presented papers at the conference.
- **Dr Gerard Kamga** made a presentation to the United Nations General Assembly's social forum on the right to development in Africa. 🍷



FACULTY OF NATURAL AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES



Dean
Prof Paul Oberholster



Faculty Internationalisation
Coordinators
**Prof Abiodun Ogundeji and
Elfrieda van den Berg**



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH, PUBLICATIONS AND COLLABORATIONS

This category encompasses all activities related to international research, including conference attendances, conference presentations, hosting of international guests for research and academic purposes, and international academic collaborations.

Centre for Environmental Management

Marthie Niemand's acceptance into the Research Excellence Accelerator Programme (REAP)

Marthie Niemand was elected as the student representative for the Executive Committee of Tree-Ring Research (TRR) 2024-2026 in October 2023, during the first International Wood Identification Training course at the Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava in Romania.

Prof Olusola Ololade's continuation of her research for the USD Innovation Research Fund

Prof Olusola Ololade continued her research for the USD Innovation Research Fund: *Salton Crisis through the Water-Energy-Food lens* in collaboration with the University of San Diego and the San Diego State University (SDSU). **Dr Bethany O'Shea** and **Dr Suzzanne Walther** from the Department of Ocean and Environmental Resources, University of San Diego, California, **Dr Amy Quandt** from the Department of Geography, SDSU, and **Dr Mihaela Sima**, Romanian Academy, are her current international collaborators. As a result, she took part in a research visit to the Department of Environmental and Ocean Sciences from 15 to 19 December 2024.

Prof Olusola Ololade's collaboration with the University of California, Davis

Prof Olusola Ololade also collaborated with

researchers from the University of California, Davis, on a research project on metal contaminants at active floating photovoltaic sites.

Dr Marinda Avenant and Prof Ololade's collaboration with the Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland

Dr Marinda Avenant and **Prof Olusola Ololade** are collaborating with the Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland, on an ERASMUS+-funded project titled, *Co-Producing Knowledge on Sustainable Development through Service-Learning Pedagogy between African and European HEIs*. The project kicked off in Helsinki on 14-15 March 2024 and involved researchers from the University of Peloponnese (Greece), Federal University of Agriculture (Nigeria), University of Ibadan (Nigeria), Mettu University (Ethiopia), Haramaya University (Ethiopia), University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Ruaha Catholic University (Tanzania), and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (South Africa).

Dr Surina Esterhuyse participated in an international research paper

Dr Surina Esterhuyse participated in research that sought to investigate the impacts of oil and gas drilling in Namibia and Botswana on the Okavango River basin groundwater resources and delta. This research activity was in collaboration with members of the University of Edinburgh and the University of Stirling, as well as the University of the Free State Institute for Groundwater Studies. It was further reported in *National Geographic*, resulting in constructive feedback by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), recommending that the Okavango delta protection zone include the entire watershed to protect the delta against upstream oil and gas drilling. She also served as associate editor of *Water International* throughout 2024.

Dr Ernestine Atangan's international research projects

Dr Ernestine Atangan was involved with several projects that included various collaborators from the University of the Free State, the Pasteur Institute of Iran (Tehran, Iran), and the Nelson Mandela University.

Dr Nico Avenant's new research collaboration with WildTrack, USA

Another new collaborative research project of Dr Nico Avenant is with WildTrack (USA), where the



project *Delivering a proof of concept for a novel biodiversity metric: Small mammal track analysis using AI, morphometrics and traditional and local ecological knowledge* has successfully reached the end of phase one of the collaboration. This work combines the long-term research of Dr Avenant, *Using small mammals as indicators of habitat integrity*, with the footprint information technology (FIT) of WildTrack. The goal is to investigate the use of small mammal tracks to sample or monitor the integrity of ecosystems, making use of a faster, more affordable, accurate, and non-invasive sampling technique. Further long-term collaborative work with Dr Guila Ganem's group from the University of Montpellier on *African striped mouse (Rhabdomys spp.) contact zones – windows on adaptability and climate change*, continues.

Prof Olusola Ololade, lead topic editor on a special international publication

Prof Olusola Ololade served as a lead topic editor for a research paper titled 'Innovations in the water-energy-food nexus for sustainable management' in *Frontiers in Sustainable Resource Management*. She was further invited as a handling editor by *Frontiers in Environmental Science*, *Frontiers in Water*, and *Frontiers in Earth Science*. She has reviewed for 10 different journals on the topics of her research expertise and was invited to review for two conferences at international and national level, constituting the sixth Euro-Mediterranean Conference for Environmental Integration (EMCEI) 2024 and the second Southern African Mountain Conference (SAMC) 2025.

Prof Olusola Ololade invited to review abstracts and full submissions for two international conferences and one national conference

Prof Olusola Ololade was invited to review abstracts and full submissions for two international conferences and one national conference, including the sixth Euro-Mediterranean Conference for Environmental Integration (EMCEI), which took place from 15 to 18 May 2024 in Marrakesh, Morocco, and an International Conference on Logistics and Industrial Engineering (ICLIE) hosted by Vn Lang University (VLU) in Vietnam (1 December 2024), as well as the second Southern African Mountain Conference (SAMC) in 2025. She was also invited and served as a volunteer reviewer for students' presentations at the American Geophysical Union (AGU24) conference in Washington, D.C., from 9 to 13

December 2024. Additionally, she has reviewed more than 10 international journals.

Dr Nkhata advising governments on climate development plans

From September to December 2024, Dr Nkhata was involved in advising the governments of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe on the development of climate investment plans. This public-service advisory work supported the formulation of climate investment plans aimed at mobilising finance for nature-based solutions. Besides strengthening climate resilience and transboundary cooperation, this work illustrates the university's mandate for engaged scholarship by translating research expertise into regional environmental policy and practice.

Dr Nicolette Vermaak's collaboration with Prof Paul Oberholster

Dr Nicolette Vermaak, along with Prof Paul Oberholster, continued to discuss the Managed Aquifer Recharge in South Africa (MARSAs) project funded by the Danida Fellowship Centre (DFC) in collaboration with researchers from the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland (GEUS), Rambøll (Denmark), the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), and the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

Department of Agricultural Economics

Dr Primrose Madende awarded second place in the IFAMA case study competition

Dr Primrose Madende participated in the International Food and Agribusiness Management Association's (IFAMA) annual conference, which was held in Almeria, Spain, from 17 to 20 June 2024. Dr Madende, who formed a part of the international case study team, was awarded second place for the case study team she was part of.

Department of Architecture

Prof Jonathan Noble

Prof Jonathan Noble was invited to attend the annual practice-based PhD conference, which took place between 20 February and 5 March 2024 at The Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London. The visit also involved a discussion concerning future PhD collaboration with Bartlett. The opening of the annual PhD exhibition on the evening of 20 February was held in memory of Prof

Jonathan Hill, who tragically passed away. Prof Hill is credited with establishing design-based research in the UK. Prof Noble was invited to present a seminar on his research – titled 'Mediating Public and Private Spaces' – at The Bartlett during the PhD conference week in London.

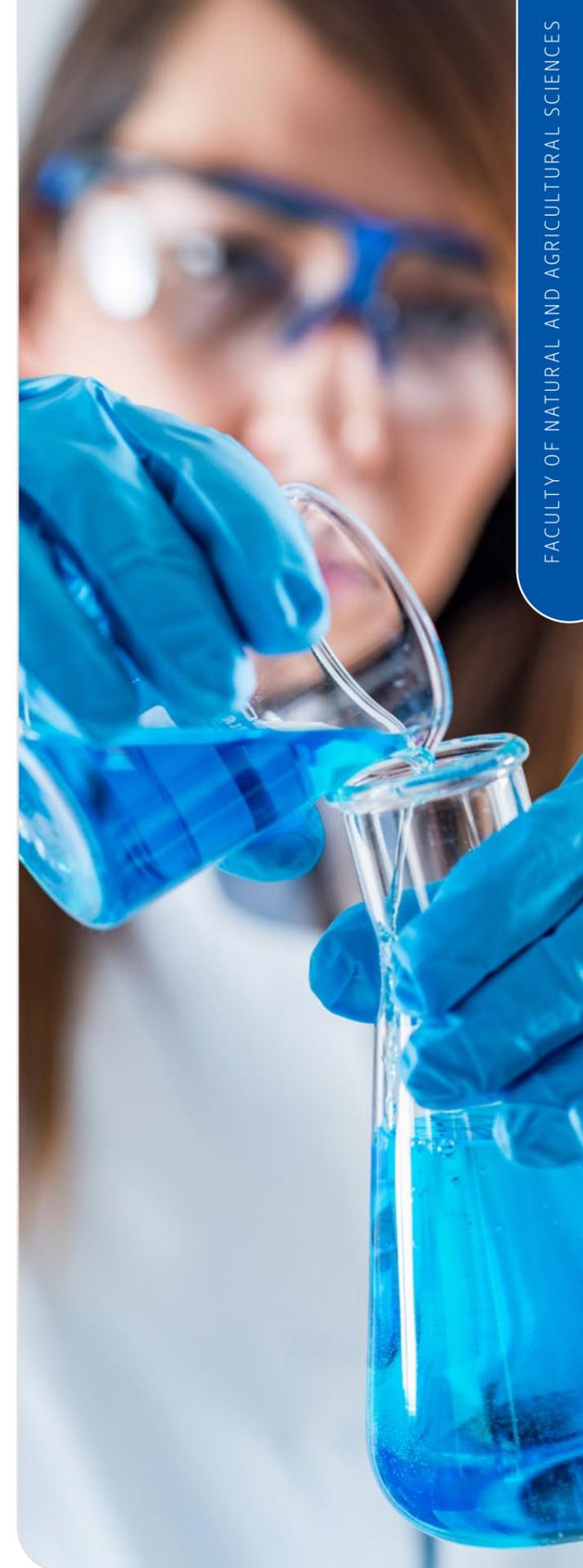
Department of Chemistry

Prof Alice Brink's research on metallo-drug development

Prof Alice Brink's research focused on metallo-drug development, incorporating the interoperable usage of chemical and macromolecular crystallography, and researching electronic reactive materials. During 2024, the research was supported by grants from the NRF Competitive Support for Y-rated Researchers and the UFS-CUT Interdisciplinary Grant in collaboration with the Central University of Technology (CUT). The research group was generously provided with synchrotron beam time at the Diamond Light Source, UK, in association with the SA Bag Time within the South African Structural Biology Consortium, as well as at the Italian Synchrotron: Elettra Sincrotrone Trieste in collaboration with the University of Warsaw, Poland. In March, the research group hosted the US Distinguished Professor, Prof N Gerasimchuk (Missouri State University, US), a global leader in cyanoxime chemistry. Several seminar lectures were presented, and new thallium chemistry protocols were shared between institutions.

Prof Lyudmila Moskaleva's role as reviewer of captured journals

Prof Lyudmila Moskaleva continues to serve as a reviewer for reputed international journals, including *Nature Chemistry*, *Nature Catalysis*, *Applied Surface Science*, *Langmuir*, *The Journal of Physical Chemistry C*, and *ACS Applied Materials & Interfaces*. As an Editorial Board member of *Scientific Reports* (Nature Publishing Group, Q1), she regularly handles submissions to the journal. In April 2024, she was invited by the German Research Foundation (DFG) as an international expert for the evaluation of a DFG Research Group, HyPerCat, in Karlsruhe, Germany. She has participated as a committee member in the interview panel for a Physical Chemistry Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor position at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and served as an external moderator for Physical Chemistry modules and an external examiner for a PhD thesis at the University of Namibia.



Prof Karel von Eschwege continued collaborations on femtosecond laser spectroscopy

Prof Karel von Eschwege continued his collaboration on femtosecond laser spectroscopy with the Laser Research Institute in the Department of Physics at Stellenbosch University (SU) and with the University of Pretoria (UP) Faculty of Health Sciences on fine particulate matter in atmospheric pollution, together with universities in Sweden. He also has continuing collaborations with the University of Gaborone in Botswana, the Ain Shams University in Cairo, Egypt, and the University of Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Prof Deon Visser and Prof Schutte-Smith international research collaborations

Prof Deon Visser and **Prof Schutte-Smith** collaborated with national industry partners MycoSure, AerTec, Gerber&Co, and Agrisulph. At academic institutions, they collaborated with **Dr Amanda-Lee Manicum** (Tshwane University of Technology), **Dr Frikkie Malan** (University of Pretoria), **Dr Jana Vermaas** (University of the Free State), and **Prof Katinka de Wet** (University of the Free State). Internationally, they collaborated with **Prof Gilles Gasser** and **Dr Kallol Purkait** (PSL University, Chimie ParisTech), **Prof Bruno Goud** (PSL University, Institut Curie), **Prof Fabio Zobi** (the University of Fribourg), **Dr Lucie Rárová** (Palacký University), **Prof Justin Wilson** (Cornell University), and **Prof Roger Alberto** (University of Zurich).

Prof Alice Brink's collaborations with Prof John Helliwell from the University of Manchester, UK

Prof Alice Brink collaborated with **Prof John Helliwell** from the University of Manchester, UK, with generous support from the Manchester Institute of Biotechnology, **Prof Dirk Opperman** (UFS Department of Microbiology and Biochemistry), and the South African Structural Biology Consortium. She also collaborated with **Prof Tshepiso Makhafola** (Central University of Technology, South Africa), **Prof Nikolay Gerasimchuk** (Missouri State University, USA), **Prof Radoslaw Kamiński** (Warsaw University of Technology, Poland), and **Prof Katarzyna Jarzemska** (Warsaw University of Technology, Poland).

Prof Johan Venter collaborated with Prof Alebel Belay at the Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia

Prof Johan Venter collaborated with **Prof Alebel Belay** from the Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia/Hunan University, Changsha, China. On 7-9 May 2024, he paid a research visit to Prof Marilé Landman's

group at the University of Pretoria. Future catalysis collaborations were discussed.

Dr Dumisani Kama's new collaboration with Dr Martin Smith from Loughborough University

Dr Dumisani Kama participated in a new collaboration with Dr Martin Smith from Loughborough University; they have been successful in securing the NRF Competitive Support for Unrated Researchers (CSUR) grant for 2025-2027, allowing Dr Kama to work alongside an expert in organometallic chemistry. He is also actively collaborating locally with Dr Orbett Alexander (UWC) and Dr Philani Mpungose (Cape Peninsula University of Technology).

Prof Lyudmila Moskaleva collaborated internationally with Prof Raghunathan Ramakrishnan

Prof Lyudmila Moskaleva continues to participate and collaborate internationally with **Prof Raghunatha Ramakrishnan** from the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Hyderabad, India – jointly funded by the NRF and DST (India) – on the computational modelling of elementary processes in hydrocarbon combustion. She also collaborates with Prof Zhi-Jian Zhao from Tianjin University, China, on the electrochemical reduction of carbon dioxide. Additionally, she works with Prof María-Pilar de Lara Castells from CISC, Madrid, on a Spanish National Research project focused on computational studies of supported sub-nanometric clusters of coinage metals. She collaborates with the group of Prof T Risse at the Free University of Berlin, Germany, on the selectivity of alcohol oxidation on Au-based catalysts, and she has established a new partnership with Prof N Gerasimchuk at Missouri State University, USA, to understand cis-trans isomerism in square-planar d8 complexes of group VIII (Ni-triade) metals with cyanoximes.

Prof Jeanet Conradie's collaboration with various international universities

Prof Jeanet Conradie has been collaborating internationally with Prof Abhik Ghosh (Department of Chemistry and Centre for Theoretical and Computational Chemistry, University of Tromsø, Tromsø, Norway) since 2002 on model porphyrin analogues using DFT methods to identify the most promising systems for cancer imaging and photodynamic therapy; Prof JH Potgieter (Wits and Manchester Metropolitan University, UK) since 2017 on electrochemical properties of various transition

metal complexes with application in DSSCs and currently on DFT methods to understand metal extraction from industrial waste using ionic liquids; Claude P Gros (University of Burgundy, Dijon Cedex, France) on DFT-calculated spectroscopic properties of corrole analogues since 2019; in the USA with Karl M Kadish (University of Houston, Texas) since 2017 on DFT properties of various porphyrin-like systems; Carl Wamser (Portland State University, Oregon) since 2017 on DFT understanding of the spectroscopic properties of hyperporphyrins; and Prof Elisa Tomat (University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ) since 2020 on molecular understanding using DFT of metal pyrrindione systems; in Cameroon with Prof Constant Tcheka (University of Ngaoundéré, Ngaoundéré) since 2022 on using natural products for waste water cleaning; Dr Jean Jules Fifen (University of Ngaoundéré, Ngaoundéré) since 2017 on ab initio calculations, currently focusing on natural compounds as antimalarial agents and Marburg virus inhibitors, and Prof Fridolin Nya Tchanganwa (University of Maroua, Maroua) since 2020 on DFT calculations of organic materials with application in organic solar cells, organic semiconductors, organic light-emitting diodes (OLEDs), optical and non-linear optical properties, etc.; and in Nigeria with Prof Kovo G Akpomie (University of Nigeria, Nsukka) since 2022, after completing his postdoctoral fellowship in her lab on functionalising natural products for waste water cleaning; and Dr Adebayo A Adeniyi (Federal University Oye-Ekiti) since 2019, after completing his postdoctoral fellowship in her lab on ab initio calculations to understand the molecular behaviour of various biological, organic, and metal-containing systems.

Prof Vladimir Azov continued his collaboration with Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Prof Vladimir Azov maintains active international collaborations that strengthen both fundamental and applied research in organic chemistry. Together with Profs Ulrich Hennecke, Steven Ballet, and Charlotte Martin at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) in Belgium, his group is working on the synthesis of non-canonical amino acids (ncAAs) bearing donor/acceptor groups or metal-binding motifs. These building blocks are employed in the design of peptide-based hydrogelators for biomedical applications, as well as in the development of novel biologically active molecules. As part of this collaboration, three postgraduate students from the University of the Free State (UFS) have undertaken two- to three-month research internships at VUB

in 2022 and 2023, where they received hands-on training in modern methods of peptide synthesis and characterisation, significantly broadening their research expertise.

In parallel, Prof Azov collaborates with Prof Jonas Warneke at Leipzig University, Germany, focusing on the elucidation of gas-phase reaction mechanisms and the use of advanced mass spectrometry techniques for synthesising new compounds and materials at the nanoscale. This partnership is further strengthened through joint efforts with leading researchers at Purdue University and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), creating a vibrant network that combines expertise in synthetic chemistry, physical chemistry, and materials science.

International collaboration between Dr Susan Bonnet and Prof Anke Wilhelm

Dr Bonnet and **Prof Wilhelm** collaborated internationally with Dr A Messi at the University of Yaoundé in Cameroon, Dr L Rarova at Palacký University in the Czech Republic, and Prof S Khom at the University of Vienna, Austria. Dr Angélique Nicolas Messi is a distinguished Cameroonian chemist renowned for his contributions to organic and natural product chemistry. He has visited the UFS on numerous occasions to make use of the nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometers in Chemistry (UFS). He has published more than five papers with Dr Bonnet and Prof Wilhelm on natural products from Cameroon.

Dr Lucie Rarova's collaboration involves bioactivity testing, including cytotoxicity screenings of natural products from the UFS on various cancer cell lines to identify potential anticancer activities.

Prof Sophia Khom assists with GABAergic screenings of natural products from the UFS using a two-microelectrode voltage clamp with *Xenopus laevis* oocytes. GABAergic natural products are compounds derived from plants, fungi, or other natural sources that interact with the GABAergic system, especially the GABAA receptors, which are the main inhibitory neurotransmitter receptors in the central nervous system. The results from Prof Khom enables Prof Wilhelm to take the GABAergic extracts, fractions, and isolated compounds further into the in-house larval locomotive zebrafish bioassay to screen these compounds for activity against epilepsy.



Collaboration between Prof Julia Puseletso Mofokeng and Prof Blanke Skipina

A research collaboration has been established between **Prof Julia Puseletso Mofokeng** at the University of the Free State and Assistant Professor Blanke Škipina, PhD, at the University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Technology, in Serbia, Europe, under the research project titled *Dielectric properties of polymer nanocomposites*, 2024 to 2025.

Department of Computer Science and Informatics

Dr Burgert Senekal and Dr Oluwafemi Oriola's continued fellowship

Dr Burgert Senekal and **Dr Oluwafemi Oriola** continued their fellowship with **Prof Eduan Kotzé's** research group. **Dr Adewuyi Adegbite** from Adekunle Ajasin University in Nigeria joined **Prof Kotzé's** research group as a postdoctoral fellow. **Dr Christa van Staden** continued her fellowship with **Prof Liezel Nel's** research group. **Dr Luna Bergh** also continued her fellowship with **Prof Tanya Stott**.

Department of Engineering Sciences

Collaboration by the Grid-Related Research Group led by Dr Jacques Maritz

The Grid-Related Research Group, led by **Dr Jacques Maritz**, has been actively collaborating with the Department of Physics at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) under the leadership of **Prof Leonardo Rydin Gorjao** since 2019. Recently, the two entities have expanded their multidisciplinary endeavours and collaboration by exchanging postgraduate students with the aim of advancing the field of complexity science. **Gerhard Venter** was awarded a prestigious PhD position in NMBU's Department of Physics in 2024, supervised by the UFS and NMBU research groups. In this position, Venter will merge the fields of complexity, graph theory, and dynamical systems to investigate complex dynamics in power grid networks. This exchange will open the door to future multidisciplinary endeavours between South African and Norwegian complexity science research groups. In the first half of 2024, the combined group explored funding opportunities along the lines of the Long-Term Joint EU-AU Research and Innovation Partnership on Sustainable Energy (LEAP-SE) consortia meetings, the Long-term Europe-Africa WEF-Nexus Multilateral Research Programme (LEAWEF) consortia meetings and facilitated student exchanges with NMBU

(Norway) and QMUL (UK). The group further hosted a visiting professor from Norway during November to December 2024.

The Green Concrete Research Group collaboration with the University of Johannesburg

The Green Concrete Research Group collaborated with the University of Johannesburg (UJ) on the 3D Printing of Houses project (one MEng and one PhD being supervised) and with Nelson Mandela University (NMU) on various research projects on green concrete (two MEng and one PhD these are being supervised). Other civil engineering science engagements include collaboration with the Central University of Technology (CUT) on a research project on the derivation of alkali activator from waste materials (one MEng thesis supervised), collaboration with Imerys Pty Ltd (France) on calcium aluminate cement (in initial stages of planning), and collaboration with the University of Yaoundé on research projects on the formulation of green concrete based on laterite soil.

Department of Geography

Dr Sanele Mbambo's membership in the US-Africa Collaborative

Dr Sanele Mbambo was elected on 26 June 2024 as a member of the US-Africa Collaborative – an initiative between United States and African academics, practitioners, civil society, professionals, and governments. The BrainTrust is dedicated to bringing together various entities, individuals, and institutions to develop strategic, innovative, and sustainable solutions that shape the future of communities.

Dr Elizabeth Rudolph participated in the following international collaborations:

Dr Elizabeth Rudolph and her collaborators at the University of Fort Hare and Unisa worked alongside two French institutions: the Centre for Research and Education in Environmental Geosciences (CEREGE) and the Department of Geosciences at the University of Paris-Saclay (GEOPS) collaborated to investigate the paleoclimate of the Southern Hemisphere. The NRF-PROTEA bilateral funding instrument supports the project and involves a team of geomorphologists, geologists, climate modellers, and physicists. They are focused on reconstructing the glacial and volcanic history of two island groups: the Prince Edward Islands (South African territory) and the

Kerguelen Archipelago (French territory). The goal is to gain insight into past climate conditions to enhance future climate models and better predict climate change and its impact on inhabited territories of the Southern Hemisphere. This collaboration spanned a two-year period from January 2023 to December 2024.

Department of Geology

Prof John Carranza is involved in two major EU-funded projects

Prof John Carranza is involved in several activities in two major EU-funded projects – the Exploration Information System (EIS) and the Sustainable Exploration for Orthomagmatic Critical Raw Materials – in the EU Charting the Road to the Green Energy Transition (SEMACRET) research project.

In the EIS project, **Prof Carranza** is involved in the testing of a computer EIS wizard developed in another work package of the same project using real data from the project's test sites in Europe, and test case studies and assessment for lithium-tin-tantalum-tungsten mineral potential in granite/pegmatite-related systems. The test case study in South Africa is the 450-km-long Orange River pegmatite belt.

In the SEMACRET project, **Prof Carranza** is responsible for 2D prospectivity modelling by integrating multi-geodata obtained from publicly available geodatabases of the Geological Survey of Finland, as well as for machine learning on 3D prospectivity modelling and resource modelling through three project sites using data sets provided by the Czech Geological Survey, Polish Geological Institute, and Geological Survey of Finland.

Besides this, **Prof Carranza** is the research competence leader of the Centre for Advanced Orebody Knowledge (AOK) under the South African Mining Extraction, Research, Development and Innovation (SAMERDI) funded by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The AOK Centre was launched in early 2023 and has subsequently established the governance of the centre, set up a computing facility, and recruited postgraduate (one PhD and four MSc) students.

Prof Frederick Roelofse's involvement in the steering committee of the International Continental Scientific Drilling Programme (ICDP) Bushveld Drilling Project (BVDP)

Prof Frederick Roelofse's involvement in the

steering committee of the International Continental Scientific Drilling Programme (ICDP) Bushveld Drilling Project (BVDP) saw him undertake several trips to Burgersfort to interact with the on-site team during the year, with the operational phase of the project having started on 26 April 2024. Several international visitors undertook sampling trips to the department's core storage facility for research projects linked to the BVDP project. These included Dr Wilhelm Nikonow and Dominic Görlicke of the Federal Institute for Geosciences (BGR) and Prof Wolfgang Maier (Cardiff University). Prof Roelofse also continued to serve as chairperson of the Paleoproterozoic Task Group of the South African Committee for Stratigraphy (SACS) and as a member of the South African National Committee for the ICDP. **Prof Roelofse** served on the scientific committee of the *100-Year Celebration of the Merensky Reef – Mineral, Metals and Mining Conference* held in Rustenburg in August 2024. He also served as guest editor for a special issue of the *South African Journal of Geology* in celebration of the said conference and as guest editor for a special issue of *The Canadian Journal of Mineralogy and Petrology*.

Prof Roelofse collaborated with scientists at the University of the Witwatersrand (Prof Lew Ashwal and Prof Susan Webb) and the GFZ German Centre for Geosciences (**Dr Robert Trumbull and Dr Ilya Veksler**) on several activities forming part of the Bushveld Complex ICDP project.



Prof John Carranza served as President of the Association of Applied Geochemists

Prof John Carranza served as President of the Association of Applied Geochemists (formerly Association of Exploration Geochemists) from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2023. Prof Carranza is also a Fellow of the Society of Economic Geologists, a member of the International Association for Mathematical Geosciences, the International Association on the Genesis of Ore Deposits, the Society for Geology Applied to Mineral Deposits, and the Geochemical Society.

Prof Carranza had several scholastic engagements during the year:

- 'From mapping of mineral prospectivity to quantitative estimation of undiscovered mineral resources' – keynote presentation at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Technical Meeting on *Assessing and Quantifying Prognosticated and Speculative Uranium Resources*, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 4-8 November 2024.
- 'Introduction to mineral prospectivity mapping', presented at the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) 2024 short course on *New Innovations in Mineral System Approach and Mineral Predictive Mapping Applied to Critical Raw Materials Exploration and Assessment*, Toronto, Canada, 1 March 2024.
- 'Artificial intelligence (AI) in mineral exploration' – lecture given at EuroGeoSurveys 56th GM Directors' Workshop, Rovaniemi, Finland, 20 March 2024.

Prof Carranza has also convened sessions in international conferences/symposia, namely a) Innovative Technology Developments in Mineral Deposit Science, Society of Economic Geologists Conference (SEG2024), Windhoek, Namibia, 27-30 September 2024; b) AI-driven mineral prospectivity mapping, 37th International Geological Congress, Busan, South Korea, 25-31 August 2024; and c) Data Science for Prediction, Gordon Research Conference: Geochemistry of Mineral Deposits, Newry, Maine, USA, 23-28 June 2024. Prof Carranza has attended/participated in conferences and symposia such as a) IAEA Technical Meeting on *Assessing and Quantifying Prognosticated and Speculative Uranium Resources*, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 4-8 November 2024. He has also delivered keynote presentations, namely, 'From mapping of mineral prospectivity to quantitative estimation of undiscovered mineral resources'; b)

30th International Applied Geochemistry Symposium (IAGS2024), Adelaide, Australia, 14-18 October 2024. Overall, in 2024, the staff of the department continued to maintain active collaboration and expand their collaborative spheres with researchers from the following institutions:

- Agencia Estatal Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Spain (collaboration in EU-funded EIS project)
- Albany Museum, South Africa (SA)
- Associação para a Investigação e Desenvolvimento de Ciências, Portugal (collaboration in EU-funded SEMACRET project)
- Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO)
- BEAK Consultants GmbH, Germany (collaboration in EU-funded EIS project)
- Berkeley Geochronology Centre, US)
- Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières (BRGM), Nancy, France
- Bureau of Geo-Exploration and Mineral Development of Guangxi, Nanning, China
- Cardiff University
- Centre for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, Germany
- Central University of Technology, SA
- Centre for Applied Geosciences of the Geological Survey of Brazil, Brasília, Distrito Federal, Brazil
- Chhattisgarh Space Applications Centre, CCOST, Raipur, India
- China Aero Geophysical Survey and Remote Sensing Centre for Natural Resources, Beijing, China
- China Earthquake Administration
- China Geological Survey
- China Mining News, China Geological Survey
- China State Environmental Protection Key Laboratory of Soil, Health and Green Remediation, College of Resources and Environment, Huazhong Agricultural University
- CIMERA, South Africa
- College of Marine Geosciences, Ocean University of China, Qingdao, China
- College of Resources and Environment, Huazhong Agricultural University, Wuhan, China
- College of Resources and Environmental Engineering, Guizhou University, Guiyang, China
- Council for Geoscience, SA
- Czech Geological Survey
- Dagang Oilfield Company, China National Petroleum Corporation, Tianjin, China

- Department of Civil, Environmental and Natural Resources Engineering, Luleå University of Technology, Luleå, Sweden
- Department of Earth Sciences, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden
- Department of Mining Engineering, Faculty of Environment, Urmia University of Technology, Urmia, Iran
- Department of Mining Engineering, Isfahan University of Technology, Isfahan, Iran
- Department of Mining Engineering, University of Kashan, Kashan, Iran
- Deutsche Lithium GmbH, Germany (collaboration in EU-funded EIS project)
- Development Research Centre of China Geological Survey, Beijing, China
- Earth and Planetary Science Division, Department of Physical Science, Kingsborough Community College of the City University of New York, Brooklyn, NY, USA
- Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique
- Faculty of Earth Resources, State Key Laboratory of Geological Process and Mineral Resources, China University of Geosciences, Wuhan, China
- Far East Geological Institute, Far Eastern Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences, Vladivostok, Russia
- Friedrich-Alexander University, Germany
- Geological Survey of Finland (collaboration in EU-funded EIS project)
- Geological Survey of Sweden (collaboration in EU-funded EIS project)
- Geology Team No. 4 of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomic Region, Nanning, China
- Geophysical Survey Centre, China Geological Survey, Langfang, China
- GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences – GFZ Potsdam, Germany
- Gispo Ltd, Finland
- Global Mountain Safeguard Research (GLOMOS), United Nations University, Bonn, Germany
- Hebei Key Laboratory of Strategic Critical Mineral Resources, Hebei GEO University, Shijiazhuang, Hebei, China
- Hubei Geological Survey, Wuhan, PR China
- Indian Institute of Remote Sensing, Dehradun 248001, India
- Inner Mongolia Geological Prospecting Co., Ltd, Hohhot, China
- Institute of Advanced Studies, China University of Geosciences, Wuhan, China
- Institute of Geomechanics, Chinese Academy of

- Geological Sciences, Beijing, China
- Institute of Geosciences, University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil
- International Mining Research Centre, China Geological Survey, Beijing, China
- James Cook University, Townsville, Australia
- Keliber Technology Oy, Finland
- Key Laboratory of Isotope Geology of Ministry of Natural Resources, Institute of Geology, Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences, Beijing, China
- Key Laboratory of Mineral Resources in Western China (Gansu Province), School of Earth Sciences, Lanzhou University, Lanzhou, China
- Korzinsski Institution, Chernogolovka, Russia
- Laboratoire de Géosciences, Géo-environnement et Prospection Minière et Hydrique, Faculté des Sciences, Morocco
- Laboratoire des Matériaux Utiles, Institut National de Recherche et d'Analyse Physico-chimiques, Technopole de Sidi, Thabet, Tunisia
- Laboratory of Dynamic Diagenesis and Metallogenesis, Institute of Geomechanics, Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences, Beijing, China
- Louisiana State University, USA
- Luleå University of Technology, Sweden (collaboration in EU-funded EIS project)
- McGregor Museum, SA
- MNR Key Laboratory of Metallogeny and Mineral Resource Assessment, Institute of Mineral Resources, Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences, Beijing, China
- Museum of Natural History, Sweden
- Natural History Museum Vienna, Austria
- Natural History Museum, London, UK
- Natural Resources Canada, Geological Survey of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
- Nelson Mandela University, SA
- Oulu University, Finland
- PetroChina Hangzhou Institute of Petroleum Geology, Hangzhou, China
- Polish Academy of Sciences
- Polish Geological Institute
- Rhodes University, SA
- School of Chemistry, Joseph Banks Laboratories, University of Lincoln, UK
- School of Civil and Resource Engineering, University of Science and Technology Beijing, Beijing, China
- School of Earth Science, China University of Geosciences, Wuhan, China
- School of Earth Sciences and Resources, China University of Geosciences, Beijing, China
- School of Earth Sciences, Hebei GEO University, Shijiazhuang, Hebei, China
- School of Gemmology, China University of Geosciences, Beijing, China
- School of Materials Science and Engineering, Qilu University of Technology (Shandong Academy of Sciences), Jinan, China
- Second Geological Mineral Exploration Institute of Gansu Provincial Geology and Mineral Bureau, Lanzhou, China
- Shenyang Geological Survey, China Geological Survey, Shenyang, China
- SHRIMP Centre of the Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences, Beijing, China
- Sibanye-Stillwater Company, SA
- State Key Laboratory of Geological Processes and Mineral Resources, China University of Geosciences, Beijing, China
- Technical University of Vienna, Austria
- Third Geological and Mineral Exploration Institute of Gansu Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources, Lanzhou, China
- Tianjin Geological Survey Centre, China Geological Survey, Tianjin, China
- Universität Hamburg, Germany
- Université de Gafsa, Faculté des Sciences, Département de Géologie, Sidi Ahmed Zarroug, Gafsa, Tunisia
- Université De Lille, France
- Université de Tunis El Manar, Faculté des Sciences de Tunis, Département de Géologie, El Manar, Tunis, Tunisia
- Université du Quebec en Abitibi-Témisamingue, Quebec, Canada
- University of Cape Town, SA
- University of Colorado, USA
- University of Exeter, UK
- University of Gothenburg, Sweden
- University of Idaho, USA
- University of Johannesburg, SA
- University of Leoben, Austria
- University of Oslo, Norway
- University of Pretoria, SA
- University of the Witwatersrand, SA
- University of Tsukuba, Ibaraki, Japan
- University of Turku, Finland
- University of Vienna, Austria
- University of Zambia
- Xi'an Centre of Mineral Resources Survey, China Geological Survey, Xi'an, China
- Zavaritsky Institute of Geology and Geochemistry, Russia

Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics

Prof Tomas Vetric's collaboration with Slovakian and Slovenian scholars

From 26 January to 12 February 2024, 4 to 14 April 2024, 26 July to 6 August 2024, and 29 October to 17 November 2024, **Prof Tomas Vetric** further strengthened his collaboration with researchers from Slovakia and Slovenia, namely Profs Marcel Abas and Martin Knor from the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Slovakia, and Prof Riste Škrekovski from the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia. Two papers were published: 'Metric dimension of circulant graphs with five consecutive generators' – Martin Knor & Riste Škrekovski; and 'Multiplicative Zagreb indices of trees with given domination number' – Marcel Abas.

Prof Johan Meyer's collaboration with Prof W-F Ke

Continuing their collaboration, **Dr Christian Seifert** from the Institute of Mathematics at the Hamburg University of Technology, Germany, visited **Dr Christian Budde** in Bloemfontein from 5 to 22 March 2025. One joint paper was published in 2024 titled 'Perturbations of non-autonomous second-order abstract Cauchy problems.'

Department of Mathematical Statistics and Actuarial Science

Prof Maksim Finkelshtein received the 2024-2026 Ewha Global Fellow award

Prof Maksim Finkelshtein received the 2024-2026 Ewha Global Fellow (EGF) award from Korea's top university (Ewha Womans University) for his excellent research collaboration with its staff, specifically Prof Ji Hwan Cha. The EGF programme encourages distinguished scholars from all over the world to actively collaborate in research and education with faculty members. **Prof Finkelstein** has collaborated extensively with researchers across Europe and the United States, but his partnership with **Prof Cha** is particularly notable.

Department of Microbiology and Biochemistry

Appointment of Prof Wynand Goosen, a distinguished leader and scholar in the field of Tuberculosis One Health

A notable development in 2024 was the appointment

of **Prof Wynand Goosen**, a distinguished leader and scholar in the field of Tuberculosis One Health. **Prof Goosen** brings extensive expertise and a broad network across medicine, veterinary sciences, environmental studies, and governmental sectors. His connections include various funding agencies such as Wellcome, European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Geographic, and the US Wild Animal Health Fund.

Nokwanda Mpontshane's visit to the University of Oxford, United Kingdom

From 30 April to 27 June 2024, **Nokwanda Mpontshane**, an MSc Microbiology student, visited the Protein Crystallography Small Research Facility (PX-SRF), Centre of Medicines Discovery, University of Oxford, United Kingdom, to produce an optimised protocol for SMT production, purification, and crystallisation. This research was performed under the supervision of **Prof Frank von Delft**, **Dr Lizbe Koekemoer**, and **Dr Michael Fairhead**. The research visit was funded by a Catalyst grant from the Africa-Oxford Initiative and has been deposited as a preprint on the bioRxiv server. In 2024, SMT from *Leishmania* species has also been added in pursuit of creating a novel dual-purpose antifungal and antiparasitic compound. This project will use X-ray crystallographic fragment screening to develop lead compounds that can be developed into novel inhibitors using medicinal organic chemistry. The fragment screening experiments will be performed in collaboration with the Xchem team researchers at the Diamond Light Source synchrotron, UK. To date, X-ray crystallographic fragment screening has not been used in the development of antifungal compounds.

Prof Dirk Opperman's collaborative projects with Prof Frank Hollmann and Dr Caroline Paul from Delft University of Technology (the Netherlands)

Prof Dirk Opperman continued his sustained collaborative projects with **Prof Frank Hollmann** and **Dr Caroline Paul** from Delft University of Technology (the Netherlands), and **Prof Selin Kara** (Leibniz University Hannover, Germany). They visited these institutions on 14 June 2024. The groups bring together experts in biocatalysis, including protein structure determination, directed evolution, and process development, and they are currently focusing on the application of biocatalysts.

Together with research groups from Norway (University of Bergen and NORCE), the United Kingdom (Exeter University), France (French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission [CEA]), and Kenya (University of Nairobi), **Prof Opperman** continued his collaboration within the ThermoK consortium, funded via the European Research Area Network Cofund (ERA-NET Cofund) on Food Systems and Climate (FOSC) to develop biotechnological routes to upcycle waste products and promote a circular economy. **Prof Opperman** attended the ThermoK consortium meeting in Bergen, Norway, from 9 to 12 June 2024.

Within the IBH node in the biocatalysis group of Prof Martie Smit and Prof Dirk Opperman, the joint project, termed 'PiLacto', in collaboration with Prof Vlada Urlacher from the Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf (HHU, Germany), continued, with both Profs Smit and Opperman visiting HHU in Germany in June 2024.

Prof Opperman also continued a collaboration with Dr Tolmie and Dr Felix Ferroni from the Department of Physics at the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET), Argentina, on the structural and functional characterisation of a copper nitrite reductase.

Prof Trudi O'Neill's collaboration with Dr Nilsa de Deus from the Mozambican National Institute of Health in Maputo (INS)

Prof Trudi O'Neill continued her collaboration with **Dr Nilsa de Deus** from the Mozambican National Institute of Health in Maputo (INS) on rotavirus diversity in Mozambique. During August 2024, **Benilde Munlela and Telma Isaías** from INS visited the Molecular Virology group in Bloemfontein to process samples for whole-genome characterisation.

Prof O'Neill also continued to collaborate with **Dr Celeste Donato** from the Australian Pathogen Genomics Programme at The Doherty Institute, Melbourne, Australia. A new collaboration with **Dr Khuzwayo Jere** (University of Liverpool, United Kingdom, and the Malawi Liverpool Wellcome Research Programme, Blantyre, Malawi) was initiated to investigate cell-mediated immune responses by rotavirus proteins. The *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG)-funded project on 'Antigens and reassortant strains for rotaviruses circulating in Africa (AfRota)' also continued and includes researchers in Germany (**Prof Reimar Johné** and **Dr Alexander Falkenhagen**, Federal Institute of Risk Assessment, Berlin, Germany), Mozambique

(**Dr De Deus**), and South Africa (with **Prof O'Neill** and **Prof Albie van Dijk** based at the University of the Free State). The project utilises the rotavirus reverse genetics system and aims to generate chimeric viruses for next-generation rotavirus vaccine development.

Kelebogile Letebele received an NRF facility-related travel and training fellowship

Kelebogile Letebele received an NRF facility-related travel and training fellowship to visit the University of Szeged, Hungary, from 1 October to 1 December 2024. Her host laboratory was the laboratory of **Prof Attila Gácsér** in the Department of Biology, focusing on fungal pathogens such as *Candida albicans*, *Candida auris*, and *Candida parapsilosis*. There, she worked on developing methods for the analysis of fungal extracellular vesicle lipids using ultra-high-performance liquid chromatography high-resolution mass spectrometry (UHPLC-HRMS).

Prof Olihile Sebolai hosted Prof Wilber Sabitti from the University of St Andrews, Scotland

Prof Olihile Sebolai hosted **Prof Wilber Sabitti** from the University of St Andrews, Scotland, on 11 August 2024. He presented a lecture on revolutionising tuberculosis treatment monitoring using the tuberculosis molecular bacterial load assay (TB-MBLA). This technology may be expanded to other respiratory pathogens. **Prof Wilber Sabitti's** visit coincided with a visit to the Centre for AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

Department of Physics

45th COSPAR Scientific Assembly in Busan, South Korea (13–21 July 2024)

Hélène Szegedi (Department of Physics) and her PhD supervisors, **Prof Philip Charles** and **Dr David Buckley**, attended the 45th Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) Scientific Assembly in Busan, South Korea (13–21 July 2024). During the conference, **Szegedi** presented their research on '[HP99] 159 – the first SSS with an evolved He donor' and **Prof Charles** presented their work on 'Symmetrical outbursts in long-orbital period CVs and Supersoft Sources'.

Prof Brian van Soelen and Joleen Barnard's research presentation

Prof Brian van Soelen and **Joleen Barnard** (PhD candidate) presented their research on the spectropolarimetry observations of blazars

at this week-long meeting held in Durham/Newcastle, in the UK. Prof Van Soelen presented on SALT spectropolarimetry of flaring blazars, while Barnard showed the results for a long-term, spectropolarimetric survey of tera-electronvolt-emitting blazars.

Department of Plant Sciences

Prof Botma Visser continued his research programme on wheat rust surveillance in South Africa

Prof Botma Visser continued his research programme on wheat rust surveillance in South Africa through the PhD study of **Isabella du Toit**. The aim of her study was the implementation of Mobile And Real-time PLant disease (MARPLE) technology to rapidly identify variants of *Puccinia graminis* f. sp. *tritici* and *Puccinia striiformis* f. sp. *tritici*, which cause stem and stripe rust of wheat, respectively. This was done in collaboration with **Prof Diane Saunders** of the John Innes Centre (JIC) in Norwich, United Kingdom. As part of her study, **Du Toit** spent two months at the JIC, during which she received training on the MARPLE system. Prof Visser formed part of the organising committee for the 53rd Congress of the Southern African Society for Plant Pathology (SASPP), which was hosted by the University of the Free State in Clarens from 22 to 25 January 2024. He, together with Prof Willem Boshoff, hosted Prof Saunders, who presented the Ethyl Doidge Memorial Address as part of the conference.

The RangeX project

The RangeX project (RangeX), funded by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) through

a BiodiverSA call (Horizon 2020) and led by South African principal investigator **Prof Ralph Clark** (UFS Afromontane Research Unit Director) and Swiss principal investigator Dr Jake Alexander (ETH Zürich), continued in 2024 with several helicopter-aided research fieldtrips to their Alpine Research Station on the plateau of the Amphitheatre at 3 100 m above sea level (masl) in the Maloti-Drakensberg.

The South African RangeX team also travelled to Todtnauberg, Germany, to participate in the annual RangeX writing retreat from 10 to 15 November 2024. Here, progress of each of the regional projects was shared, data management was standardised, publications were planned and drafted, and the future for continuing projects was discussed.

Third and final full cycle of plant trait measurements and camera trap observations (Afromontane Research Unit)

South African co-PI **Prof Sandy-Lynn Steenhuisen**, postdoctoral fellow **Dr Stephanie Payne**, UFS Plant Sciences affiliate **Dr Onalenna Gwate**, master's student **Lesego Malekana**, and several team members from the Afromontane Research Unit (UFS, Qwaqwa) and the Centre for Biological Control at Rhodes University, conducted their third and final full cycle of plant trait measurements and camera trap observations from December 2024 to April 2025 to assess the effects of elevation and warming on range-expanding plant species. Alongside other insect and pollinator data, **Prof Steenhuisen** and **Dr Payne** collected camera trap images of insect visitors to transplant *Scabiosa* flowers. The images will be annotated and analysed in partnership with Dr Jamie Alison at Aarhus University, Denmark, in order to use these images to train machine learning models to identify insect visitors to flowers.



Research collaboration by Prof Rouxlene van der Merwe in 2024

Prof Rouxlene van der Merwe's research focuses on breeding for resistance to pod shattering in vegetable-type soybean (in collaboration with the Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology, Chinese Academy of Sciences). This research continued to make progress towards the development of an improved South African vegetable-type soybean cultivar that shows resistance to pod shattering.

Research collaboration to characterise maize rust pathogens

A study to characterise isolates of the maize rust pathogen, *Puccinia sorghi*, was completed with financial support from the Maize Trust. Field phenotyping of wheat and barley research populations to map rust resistance sources was successfully carried out in collaboration with **Dr Renée Prins** at Central Genetics (CenGen) and **Prof Brian Steffenson** at the University of Minnesota.

Dr Norman Muzhinji led the Microbial Ecology and Soilborne Diseases research group

Dr Norman Muzhinji led the Microbial Ecology and Soilborne Diseases research group, which was established in September 2023 and focused on soil health, soil-borne diseases of solanaceous crops, and sustainable agriculture. The group investigated host-pathogen interactions using advanced bioinformatics, including genomics and transcriptomics, to develop holistic disease management strategies. In collaboration with **Dr Tika Adhikari** and **Prof Frank Louws** from North Carolina State University, they provided whole genome sequencing resources for *Botrytis cinerea*, the causative agent of grey mould on small fruits, and conducted comparative genomics of *Colletotrichum* species associated with anthracnose in strawberries.

Dr Makoena Moloi's international collaboration with Prof Ned Bowden

Dr Moloi collaborated with **Prof Ned Bowden** from the University of Iowa, USA, on a project involving the use of cysteine derivatives for the improvement of drought tolerance in edamame. They also supervised one PhD student in Plant Sciences. **Dr Moloi** currently has a continuing collaboration with **Prof Brigitta Tóth** from the University of Debrecen, Hungary. The collaboration yielded significant outcomes in 2025, including one DHET-accredited publication (Plants

2025, 14, 1955) and two conference presentations (50th South African Association of Botanists Conference, June 2025; 60th Croatian and 20th International Symposium on Agriculture, Bol, pp. 137-141, 2025, ISSN 2459-5543). In addition, **Dr Moloi** supervised another PhD student (UFS), **Masego Sekhurwane**, with **Prof Béla Kovács** (co-supervisor) at the University of Debrecen. This student conducted part of her doctoral research during a five-month research stay (September 2024-January 2025) at Debrecen. Furthermore, **Dr Moloi** has commenced a new collaboration with **Dr Csilla Tóth** from the University of Nyíregyháza in Hungary. Their collaboration is centred around heat and drought stress physiology at the ultrastructural level.

Dr Andri van Aardt and Dr Lloyd Rossouw (Plant Sciences research affiliate) collaborated with Dr Michael Toffolo on the PEOPLE project

Dr Van Aardt and **Dr Lloyd Rossouw** (Plant Sciences research affiliate) collaborated with **Dr Michael Toffolo** from the CNRS and the Bordeaux Montaigne University in France on the Palaeoecology and Open-Landscape adaptations of Pleistocene humans in South Africa (PEOPLE) project, exploring the role of changing environments in the adaptation strategies of *H. sapiens* in the Middle and Late Pleistocene in the central interior of the country. This project also includes other researchers from Kiel University in Germany, the Texas State University in the USA, the National Human Evolution Research Centre (CENIEH), and the University of Alcalá in Spain.

UFS collaborations that have attracted international collaborators

Internationally, **Dr Rudo Ngara** continues to collaborate with **Prof Stephen Chivasa** from Durham University, UK, primarily focusing on the metabolome and proteome analyses of plants in response to water deprivation. This collaboration was initially forged in 2016 when **Prof Chivasa** visited **Dr Ngara's** research group on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus and has been cemented over the years with collaborative research grants between the researchers and research visits to Durham University by **Dr Ngara** and some of her postgraduate students between 2017 and 2019. In general, the collaboration aims to unravel the molecular responses of cereal crops to drought stress and to offer opportunities for **Dr Ngara's** postgraduate students to be co-supervised by **Prof Chivasa**.

UFS collaborated with Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology, China

Prof Rouxlene van der Merwe continued her collaboration with **Prof Qiuying Zhang** from the Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology, Chinese Academy of Sciences. The collaboration commenced on 1 April 2014 as part of the NRF-MOST South Africa-China Joint project, which focuses on breeding for resistance to pod shattering in vegetable-type soybeans.

UFS and KAUST research paper collaboration by Prof Willem Boshoff

Prof Willem Boshoff collaborated with **Prof Brande Wulff** and researchers at the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, resulting in a paper titled 'Origin and evolution of the bread wheat D genome', which was published on 14 August 2024.

Dr Mpho Mafa took part in the following international collaborations:

Dr Mafa collaborated with **Dr Samkelo Malgas** (University of Pretoria, South Africa), **Prof Brett Pletschke** (Rhodes University, South Africa), and **Prof Aniko Varnai** (Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway) to study the chemical composition of the lignocellulose in agricultural waste/biomass with a high holocellulolytic content. They developed enzyme cocktails to extract and saccharify the holocellulolytic content, producing simple sugars that can be fermented into value-added products (VAPS), e.g., ethanol, butanol, short fatty acids, and aromatic compounds, which have broad application in the biorefinery, food, and agro-processing sector/industries.

Dr Mpho Mafa attended the 20th International Conference on Polysaccharides and Glycoscience (20th ICPG) in Prague, Czech Republic, hosted by the University of Chemistry and Technology from 13 to 15 November 2024. **Dr Mafa** and his PhD student (**Mamosela Mohotloane**) presented their work on the formulation of the CAZymes-based cocktail for effective enzyme saccharification of the mango seed husk and rooibos bagasse, respectively. **Dr Mafa's** trip to the Czech Republic (Prague) was sponsored by the UFS Future Professoriate mentoring programme, while **Mohotloane** was funded by the CSIR DSTI Inter-programme Bursary Scheme (IBS). During the conference, **Dr Mafa** engaged with potential collaborators.

Prof Sandy-Lynn Steenhuisen's national collaborations spark new international connections

Prof Steenhuisen continued many national collaborations with researchers at other South African universities and research institutions in 2024. She continued her main collaboration with the Centre for Biological Control (CBC; Rhodes University), with **Prof Grant Martin** and **Dr Kim Canavan**, with whom she co-supervises seven postgraduate students. This collaboration resulted in a new collaboration with another esteemed CBC researcher, **Prof Martin Hill**, as they form part of a supervisory team for a new master's student, **Mukulolo Khaku**. This resulted in a new international collaboration with **Dr Andrew McConnachie** of the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Primary Industries, focusing on the risk assessment of introducing a tortoise beetle (*Gratiana spadicea*) into Australia as a biological control agent for the invasive *Solanum sisymbriifolium* (Solanaceae).

Dr Norman Muzhinji collaborated with Dr Tika Adhikari and Prof Frank Louws from North Carolina State University

Dr Norman Muzhinji has been collaborating with **Dr Tika Adhikari** and **Prof Frank Louws** from North Carolina State University from January 2023 on the genome sequencing and comparative genomics of *Botrytis* and *Colletotrichum* isolates from blueberries and strawberries, as well as *Alternaria* isolates from tomatoes. The collaboration culminated in three publications in peer-reviewed journals.

Prof Maryke Labuschagne's collaborations

In 2024, **Prof Labuschagne** engaged in extensive international collaborations, partnering with the University of Córdoba in Spain, the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture in Nigeria and Zambia, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics in Kenya and Zimbabwe, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) in Zimbabwe, and the University of Namibia. These partnerships were further strengthened by the contributions of three postdoctoral fellows – **Isaac Amegbor** (Ghana), **Tesfaye Mekonnen** (Ethiopia), and **Neila Abdi** (Tunisia) – who worked alongside **Prof Labuschagne** in the field of plant breeding.

Dr Angeline van Biljon and Dr Amelework Assefa collaborated on a project to discover the nutritional value of the cassava crop

Dr Van Biljon collaborated with **Dr Amelework Assefa** from the ARC-Vegetable, Industrial and Medicinal Plants on a cassava project focusing on the nutritional value of the crop. **Dr Van Biljon** further collaborated with **Prof Erik Alexandersson** and **Dr Sajeevan Radha Sivarajan** from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Alnarp, Sweden, focusing on plant biology for breeding and protection of major staple crops.

Prof Sandy-Lynn Steenhuisen attended the 20th International Botanical Congress (IBC) in Madrid, Spain, from 21 to 27 July 2024

Prof Steenhuisen attended the 20th International Botanical Congress (IBC) in Madrid, Spain, from 21 to 27 July 2024, presenting work on invasive *Rosaceae* undertaken by her Qwaqwa Plant-Animal Interactions Research (QPAIR) group. Sponsored by the Department of Higher Education's (DHET) Future Professors Programme, she was able to connect with collaborators from the USA involved in the Protea project for planning an upcoming field season in South Africa in 2025, other South African botanists to advertise IBC 2029 in Cape Town – of which **Prof Steenhuisen** is a member of the scientific committee, as well as other international researchers.

Dr Stephanie Payne and Prof Peter Taylor attended the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment workshop

In June 2024, **Dr Stephanie Payne**, along with Prof Peter Taylor (Department of Zoology and Entomology, Qwaqwa Campus), was invited to attend the first Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA) Workshop as an expert in Southern African mountain flora, hosted by the University of Lausanne and the University of Bern in Davos, Switzerland, from 11 to 14 June 2024.

Department of Quantity Surveying and Construction Management

Prof Kahilu Kajimo-Shakantu

Prof Kahilu Kajimo-Shakantu participated as a panellist at the 11th African Real Estate Society (AFRES) International Conference in Livingstone, Zambia, from 10 to 13 September 2024. The conference was themed *Smart Cities in Africa for the 21st Century* and focused on promoting sustainable, smart, resilient, and inclusive African cities

through infrastructure upgrading and retrofitting. Her participation highlighted the department's commitment to contributing to continental discussions on urban development and innovation in the built environment. **Prof Kajimo-Shakantu** also collaborated on scholarly work with colleagues from both South Africa and abroad, including the Copperbelt University in Zambia. These partnerships contributed to advancing research in sustainable construction and infrastructure development.

Dr Christopher Amoah

Dr Christopher Amoah engaged in research collaborations with academics from Nelson Mandela University (South Africa), Frederick Simpeh and Justice William from Akenten Appiah-Menka University of Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Development (Ghana), Kabir Ibrahim from Obafemi Awolowo University (Nigeria), and Cape Coast Technical University (Ghana). These collaborations resulted in several co-authored publications, such as the paper titled 'Adoption challenges of sensing technologies in construction project management in sub-Saharan African countries', among other knowledge exchange initiatives.

Dr Akinradewo Opeoluwa

Dr Akinradewo Opeoluwa has maintained collaborative research links with scholars from the University of Johannesburg (South Africa) and the International University (Malaysia), contributing to multiple joint publications in the field of built environment innovation. This collaboration started on 1 September 2023 and will end on 31 December 2025. The collaboration is renewable annually, subject to both parties' interest in continuing the collaboration.

Department of Soil, Crop and Climate Sciences

Prof Elmarie Kotzé and Prof Gert Ceronio's collaboration with the University of Bonn, Germany

Prof Elmarie Kotzé and **Prof Gert Ceronio** have collaborated with the University of Bonn, Germany, on the effect of sub-soil amelioration on water-use efficiency in maize under semi-arid conditions. This partnership, which is built on a 14-year research relationship, involved visiting researchers from Germany, utilising the Kenilworth Research Farm's facilities for valuable measurements. **Prof Kotzé** also

collaborated with researchers from the University of Dijon, France, on a joint project investigating soil carbon dynamics in temperate grasslands in the Drakensberg, South Africa. As part of this work, PhD student **Lindokuhle Dlamini** obtained his degree through a cotutelle arrangement between the two institutions.

Prof Linus Franke and Dr Elmarie van der Watt's research on agronomic practices

Prof Linus Franke and **Dr Elmarie van der Watt** continued their research on agronomic practices for growing hybrid potatoes from seed. Greenhouse and field trials with bio-stimulants and different agronomic practices were conducted. The work is supported by a grant from DST-NRF and Solynta BV, a company in the Netherlands involved in hybrid potato breeding.

Profs Johan van Tol and Elmarie Kotzé expanding the horizons of their German-funded project in agriculture

Profs Johan van Tol and **Elmarie Kotzé** are collaborating on a project funded by the German Department of Agriculture, in partnership with the Technical University of Munich (TUM) and the University of Pretoria (UP). This project aims to assess below-ground carbon storage in various forest systems in the Vhembe District, Limpopo, while also comparing forest management practices between Germany and South Africa. In July, **Prof van Tol**, **Prof Kotzé**, and PhD student **Arno Buys** visited the Technical University of Munich and several forest sites in Germany to further their research.

Prof Tesfay Weldeslassie's internationalisation in research projects, grants, and other milestones

- **Prof Weldeslassie** was awarded a €308 020 research project grant for 2024-2028 from the European Union through the CREATE-GreenAfrica initiative. This project addresses climate change, a global challenge that disproportionately affects Africa, one of the world's most vulnerable continents.
- **Prof Weldeslassie** also initiated a research collaboration between the School of Life Sciences at Nantong University, China, and the UFS, focusing on climate resilience and crop breeding. Although the funding proposal was not successful, this collaboration laid the foundation for future research endeavours.
- Additionally, **Prof Weldeslassie** has formed a

consortium with international partners from the Netherlands, Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Africa, as well as national collaborators from Walter Sisulu University and the Agricultural Research Council, under the B-SEEN project. This project focuses on enhancing socio-ecological resilience in vulnerable communities across Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Africa by developing sustainable, locally driven resilience strategies. The project has been submitted for funding under the Long-Term Europe-Africa Water-Energy-Food Nexus Research Programme.

Dr Elmarie van der Watt's visit to the AgraForUm in Germany

Dr Elmarie van der Watt visited the AgraForUm in Germany as part of an initiative to strengthen research collaboration between the UFS and Agraforum. During this visit, potato trials were conducted at one of the largest potato producers in Germany.

Department of Sustainable Food Systems and Development

The AgriMocks project, an EU-funded project with the UFS as a partner institution

The AgriMocks project (February 2025–December 2028) – Mastering Opportunity-scouting, Career guidance, and Key-job Skills in Agriculture – is another important EU initiative involving the UFS. Funded by the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange Programme, AgriMocks aims to prepare African youth for agricultural jobs through digital learning and skills development in agriculture-related careers. The project brings together partners from South Africa, Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal, Finland, and the Western Balkans to jointly develop and deliver a virtual curriculum tailored to the realities of modern agriculture.

2024 highlights of the MAINSTREAM project

The MAINSTREAM project (January 2024–December 2027) is funded by the EU as part of the Intra-Africa Mobility Programme and is focused on staff and student mobility on the African continent. During 2024, project planning and meetings between the partner universities took place and at the end of 2024, the first cohort of students who would receive scholarships as part of the programme was selected. Ten students from three African countries were



selected to join the UFS for doctoral, master's, and traineeship scholarships. Two UFS students were selected for scholarships at partner universities in Kenya and Ethiopia.

Collaborations with:

- Aeres University of Applied Sciences (the Netherlands)

Summary Report: Erasmus+ KA171 Mobility Project with the University of the Free State
Project Reference: 2023-1-NL01-KA171-HED-000142196

Project Title: Learning mobility of individuals
Project Duration: 1/8/2023-31/7/2025 (24 months)

Partner Institution: University of the Free State, South Africa (OID: E10179615)

Project Purpose:

This Erasmus+ Key Action 1 (KA171) International Credit Mobility project facilitates academic exchange between the Stichting Aeres Groep (the Netherlands) and the University of the Free State (South Africa) within the Sub-Saharan Africa region. The project supports both staff teaching mobility and student study mobility to enhance international cooperation, academic development, and cross-cultural learning experiences.

Financial Overview

Total Grant Awarded: EUR 60 760

Budget Breakdown:

- Individual Support: EUR 23 760
- Travel: EUR 25 500
- Top-up for participants with fewer opportunities: EUR 3 000
- Organisational Support: EUR 8 500

Mobility Activities

Total Participants: 17 individuals (6 with fewer opportunities)

Incoming Mobilities (to the Netherlands): 12 participants

- Staff Mobility for Teaching: 6 staff members
- Grant: EUR 17 160
- Student Mobility for Studies: 6 students (all 6 identified as having fewer opportunities)
- Grant: EUR 22200 (including EUR 3 000 top-up support)

Outgoing Mobilities (to South Africa): 5 participants

- Staff Mobility for Teaching: 5 staff members
- Grant: EUR 12 900

Key Features

- Inclusion Focus: 35% of participants (6 out of 17) are identified as individuals with fewer opportunities, receiving additional financial support
- Balanced Exchange: The project includes both incoming and outgoing flows, although with greater emphasis on incoming mobility
- Staff Development: 11 staff members participate in teaching exchanges, promoting knowledge transfer and institutional capacity building
- Student Experience: 6 students benefit from international study experiences at partner institutions

Agreement Signed: 21 July 2023

(by Stichting Aeres Groep) and 11 August 2023 (by National Agency)

Coordinator: Bastiaan Marinus Peter Pellikaan, Stichting Aeres Groep

- University of Bergen (Norway)
- Weihestephan-Triesdorf (Germany) (2023 – continuing)
- University of Eldoret (Kenya)
- RUFORUM (TAGDev 2.0)

Summary Report: TAGDev 2.0 Project with the University of the Free State

Project Reference: TAGDev 2.0 – ASEC (Agrifood Systems and Entrepreneurship Community Action Research Projects)

Project Title: Co-Creating Sustainable Solutions: A Collaborative Approach Empowering Emerging Farmers, Students, and Communities for Stronger Crop and Livestock Value Chains in South Africa

Project Duration: 1 November 2023– 31 October 2033 (10 years)

Lead Organisations: RUFORUM, Mastercard Foundation, GCHERA

Partner Network:

172 partner universities across Africa
UFS Partner Institution: Aeres University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands

Project Purpose:

TAGDev 2.0 (Transforming African Agricultural Universities to meaningfully contribute to Africa's growth and development – Phase II) is a decade-long collaborative initiative aimed at transforming agricultural education across Africa. The programme addresses critical barriers in agricultural education and focuses on enhancing

the capacity of universities and TVET institutions to empower young people in driving inclusive, equitable, and climate-resilient transformations in agriculture and agrifood systems.

Key Objectives:

- Transform educational models to equip students as effective change agents in agriculture
- Strengthen entrepreneurship education and innovation commercialisation
- Develop climate-adaptive technologies and integrate young technology users into agricultural markets
- Enhance agricultural extension services for smallholder farmers
- Improve collaboration among education ecosystem stakeholders

Critical Barriers Addressed:

The project specifically targets six interconnected challenges:

1. Inadequate Educational Models – Traditional university and TVET approaches fail to equip students with necessary practical skills
2. Ineffective Policies and Systems – Current frameworks do not support transformative educational experiences
3. Limited Entrepreneurship Capacity – Weak support for innovation and commercialisation restricts student development
4. Weak Climate Technology Generation – Deficiency in developing climate-resilient technologies and market integration
5. Inadequate Extension Services – Poor capacity to help smallholder farmers transition to business-oriented practices
6. Poor Stakeholder Collaboration – Ineffective partnerships limit job and business opportunities for youth

UFS-Specific Focus: South African Context

The University of the Free State's involvement focuses on the following:

- Crop and Livestock Value Chains – Strengthening production, processing, and marketing systems
- Community Action Research – Collaborative projects with emerging farmers and local communities
- Student Empowerment – Practical learning experiences in real agricultural contexts
- Sustainable Solutions – Co-creation approaches involving multiple stakeholders

Project Scope and Scale

Geographic Coverage:

- Focus on 10 African nations including Uganda, Kenya, and Nigeria
- South Africa as key implementation country for UFS activities
- Headquarters: Kampala, Uganda

Institutional Network:

- 175 partner universities across Africa
- 12 core African universities with dedicated partner universities
- Multi-sectoral partnerships including universities, TVETs, private sector, and community organisations

Target Beneficiaries:

- Agricultural students at universities and TVETs
- Emerging and smallholder farmers
- Young entrepreneurs in agrifood systems
- Agricultural extension workers
- Rural communities

Key Programme Components

1. Capacity Building
 - Faculty development in entrepreneurship education
 - Training in climate-smart agriculture
 - Research methodology and action research skills
 - Innovation and technology commercialisation
2. Curriculum Transformation
 - Integration of entrepreneurship across agricultural curricula
 - Experiential learning approaches
 - Climate resilience and sustainability modules
 - Business-oriented agricultural practices
3. Community Engagement
 - Action research projects with farming communities
 - Co-creation of solutions with stakeholders
 - Technology demonstration and adoption
 - Value chain development initiatives
4. Innovation and Technology
 - Development of climate-adaptive agricultural technologies
 - Support for student-led innovations
 - Commercialisation pathways for agricultural innovations
 - Digital agriculture solutions
5. Policy Influence
 - Evidence-based policy recommendations

- Institutional policy reforms
- National agricultural education policy engagement
- Regional harmonisation initiatives

Expected Outcomes (2023–2033)

Institutional Level:

- Transformed agricultural education curricula at partner universities
- Enhanced research and innovation capacity
- Strengthened university-community partnerships
- Improved institutional responsiveness to agricultural sector needs

Student Level:

- Graduates equipped with entrepreneurial skills
- Enhanced employability and business creation capacity
- Practical experience in agricultural value chains
- Leadership skills for agricultural transformation

Community Level:

- Improved agricultural productivity and incomes
- Adoption of climate-smart practices
- Strengthened crop and livestock value chains
- Enhanced food security and nutrition

Systemic Level:

- Policy reforms supporting agricultural education transformation
- Stronger collaboration among agricultural education stakeholders
- Sustainable models for university-led agricultural development
- Regional capacity for climate-resilient agriculture

Financial Overview

Total Programme Budget:
Funded by Mastercard Foundation
(specific UFS allocation to be confirmed)

Key Budget Areas:

- Institutional capacity building and faculty development
- Student scholarships and experiential learning programmes
- Community action research projects
- Innovation and technology development
- Programme coordination, monitoring, and evaluation

- Knowledge management and dissemination

UFS Research and Development Implications

This project positions the UFS within Africa's largest agricultural education transformation initiative, providing the following:

- Access to pan-African research and learning networks
- Opportunities for comparative studies across 172 institutions
- Platform for testing and scaling educational innovations
- Long-term (10-year) sustainable partnership framework
- Integration with international best practices through partnerships such as Aeres UAS.

Project Coordination:

RUFORUM Secretariat: Kampala, Uganda
UFS Project Lead: Prof Jan Willem Swanepoel

- EU (MASSTER, CaReFoAfrica) This is a project similar to MAINSTREAM that the UFS co-ordinates (2024–2027) under 6.1.70.
- GCHERA, Mastercard Foundation

Department of Urban and Regional Planning

Prof Verna Nel appointed as co-chair of the IGU Commission Geography of Governance steering committee

Prof Verna Nel was appointed as co-chair of the International Geographical Union (IGU) Commission Geography of Governance Steering Committee 2024–2028. The International Geographical Union is an international, professional, and non-governmental organisation established for the development of geography. The objectives are to promote geography by coordinating and initiating geographical research

and teaching across the world. The Steering Committee is responsible for arranging conferences (including sessions in other conferences such as the biennial Conferences of the International Geography Union or the Association of American Geographers). The arrangements include themes, proposals for specific sessions, the location of annual conferences, and review of the abstracts for the conferences. Members of the committee are also responsible for arranging conferences or workshops in their country to promote the Geography of Governance. She is the only committee member from Africa.

Department of Zoology and Entomology

UFS students invited to a research trip on lizard malaria research

As part of a collaborative research project on lizard malaria between Villanova University (USA) and the National Museum of Namibia (Windhoek), PhD student **James Kidd** and MSc student **Monique Barnard** were invited to join a research trip to Namibia from 31 October to 24 November 2024. This research trip forms part of a long-term collaborative project, scheduled to conclude in 2026. To date, the project has successfully collected more than 300 samples, from Namibia alone, for further analyses. Several manuscripts are currently in preparation, including multiple new species descriptions, which will substantially contribute to the field of reptile haemosporidia research and enhance the research profile of the UFS. The involvement of postgraduate students in this international collaboration builds research capacity; we have already secured an NRF FBIP grant to continue working with our international colleagues in collaboration with the department on the Qwaqwa Campus.



'A quest for novel fungal species with the ability to bioremediate polyethylene in the eastern region of the Free State, South Africa' – paper presentation attended by UFS members

Nozipho Kheswa (a staff member and PhD student on the University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus) presented a poster titled, 'A quest for novel fungal species with the ability to bioremediate polyethylene in the eastern region of the Free State, South Africa', at the 34th Annual Meeting of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC), which took place in Seville, Spain from 5 to 9 May 2024. Their poster was ranked among the Top 100 of 2 600 posters.

Khia van der Meulen enrolled for a Master of Science in social vocalisation and human-bat interactions

Alexandra Howard travelled to the University of Hohenheim in Germany on an Erasmus Mobility grant, spending November 2024 with Prof Ingo Grass (collaborator of Peter), who assisted with data analysis and provided valuable networking with the agroecology group.

UFS received appointment as the Southern African Regional Hub Coordinator of the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment

Prof Peter Taylor was appointed as the Southern African Regional Hub Coordinator of the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA), according to the terms of an MOU between the ARU/UFS and the GMBA signed on 17 April 2024. Prof Taylor also attended a workshop of the GMBA in Davos, Switzerland, from 12 to 14 June 2024, where he presented a paper at the World Biodiversity Forum. Prof Taylor, his students, and collaborators published a synthesis of the importance of the Southern African Escarpment in the biogeography of mountain bats in the journal *Global Change Biology*.

UFS PhD candidates presented at the 34th Annual Meeting of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry

Several achievements have come from the Ecotoxicology Research Laboratory. Between 5 and 9 May 2024, **Ngitheni Nyoka** and Sanele Mnkandla (both PhD candidates) presented at the 34th Annual Meeting of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (European Chapter) in Seville, Spain.

Collaboration by the University of the Free State and Julius Kühn Institute (Germany) in 2024

Dr Milad Rashidifard established strong research collaborations with **Dr Samad Ashrafi**, **Dr Torsten Tonen**, and **Dr Wolfgang Maier** from the Julius Kühn Institute (JKI) in Germany, resulting in several published articles that contribute to advancing knowledge in the field. The collaboration is focused on the establishment of a protocol for the isolation of antagonistic microbes with biocontrol potential for nematode management under South African climatic conditions. This will help to build – for the first time – a library of microbes with biocontrol potential from South Africa, targeting root-knot nematodes and cyst nematodes, which will open doors for downstream research on their efficacy and mode of action for nematode management. He also collaborates with **Prof Majid Pedram** from Tarbiat Modares University (Iran) and **Prof Akbar Karegar** from Shiraz University (Iran), further strengthening international partnerships and expanding the impact of his research. The latter collaboration is centred on the identification of plant-parasitic nematodes from Iran and exchanging knowledge on the latest molecular advancements for nematode taxonomy and community profiling.

University of the Free State and Rede de Investigação em Biodiversidade e Biologia Evolutiva in Lisbon, Portugal collaboration

Prof Aliza le Roux continued to collaborate with Clara Grilo, a principal researcher at Rede de Investigação em Biodiversidade e Biologia Evolutiva in Lisbon, Portugal. Their work is focusing on global patterns and drivers of wildlife-vehicle collisions. She has also led projects in collaboration with Kyran Kunkel (University of Montana), colleagues at the University of Michigan (Gelada Research Group), the Expanded Freshwater and Terrestrial Environmental Observation Network (EFTEON), members of the UFS Department of Plant Sciences, and has published with colleagues at the University of Michigan (Gelada Research Group). In 2024, she started a new collaboration with Dr Emily Bennet from the University of Botswana, with the aim of creating a network of women working in conservation in Southern Africa. This collaboration is leading towards a congress in Botswana in 2026, bringing together women representing most counties in Southern Africa. She has several other partnerships in the pipeline, awaiting funding support to fully materialise.

Dr Luther van der Mescht's new collaboration with Dr Charles Ndawula

Dr Luther van der Mescht commenced a collaboration with Dr Charles Ndawula (National Livestock Resources Research Institute (Uganda) on 9 July 2024 to investigate a novel method for testing acaricide resistance and continued collaboration with Prof Boris Krasnov (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel) and other international colleagues studying the evolutionary ecology, biogeography, and community ecology of parasites.

In 2024, Prof Peter Taylor collaborated with scholars from Eswatini institutions

Through co-supervision of two PhD students (**Alexandra Howard** and **Monday Mludli**) and co-authorship of three papers from their recent joint research on African bat diversity (in *Global Change Biology*, *Conservation Biology*, and *Scientific Data*), Prof Taylor continues to collaborate actively with Prof Ara Monadjem (formerly of the University of Eswatini; moved to the University of Pretoria in June 2025). Prof Taylor has also collaborated with Prof Ingo Grass from the University of Hohenheim (Germany) through their joint continuing research on biocontrol and pollination in macadamia orchards, resulting in a recent co-authored paper (also involving three of their co-supervised students, Linden, Weier, and Anders) in the journal *Ecological Applications* on 'Complementary effects of pollination and biocontrol services enable ecological intensification in macadamia orchards by their shared students'. Funded by EuroS+, Prof Grass also hosted Prof Taylor's PhD student (Alexandra Howard) in his lab in Stuttgart in October 2024 to provide networking opportunities and assist with statistical analysis of Howard's PHD data. The funded projects of NatuRA (Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in Alpine and Mountain Grassland Ecosystems under Global Change) and OHRatSA (One Health and Rodent Pests in South African Townships), make it possible for Prof Taylor to work closely with Prof Lourens Swanepoel (University of Venda) and Prof Steve Belmain (University of Greenwich, UK). In addition, Prof Taylor serves as the lead South African partner on the OHRatSA project, which has secured approximately R14 million from the South African and UK Medical Research Councils in 2024, including R4,38 million allocated to the UFS Department of Zoology and Entomology. This project, running from March 2025 to March 2028, involves collaborators from the University of Venda and the University of Greenwich.

Prof Daryl Codron's visit to the University of Colorado

Prof Daryl Codron's visit to the University of Colorado (UC) Boulder from 5 to 15 July 2024 was part of his involvement in a Human Frontier Science Programme-funded research project advancing novel approaches to isotopic analysis of early hominin diets. The project included collaborators from UC (**Caj Neubauer** and **Matt Sponheimer**), the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry, Mainz, Germany (**Tina Luedecke** and other colleagues), the University of Munich (**Rani Bakkour**), and others. Studies of SA palaeoenvironments were in collaboration with Liora Horwitz (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), and he was also a co-investigator of an ERC-Stg project 'PEOPLE', led by **Michael Toffolo** (University of Bordeaux, France), studying Paleolithic human palaeo-dispersal in relation to resources across the SA central interior. Several studies of life history evolution and adaptation were published in collaboration with **Marcus Clauss** (University of Zurich, Switzerland). Finally, **Runè van der Merwe**, a PhD student in **Prof Codron's** lab, was co-supervised by **Han Olf** as part of a joint degree with the University of Groningen, the Netherlands, from September 2022 to August 2026 – an international collaboration that opens new avenues to explore for future joint-degree students.

Dr Edward Netherlands continued his contributions to the Next Generation Taxonomy (NGTax)

From 6 May 2024 to 31 October 2024, **Dr Edward Netherlands** led and contributed to an international collaborative research project that advanced biodiversity and parasite research, particularly in ectothermic vertebrates. His involvement in the Next Generation Taxonomy (NGTax) project, in collaboration with Dr Michele Castelli (University of Pavia, Italy), focused on the genomic characterisation of frog trypanosomes, with PhD student Bernie Jordan leading genome sequencing efforts.

He was also involved in a US NSF-funded project on the systematics and diversity of Haemosporida parasites in African lizards, working with **Prof Aaron Bauer** and **Dr Amanda Picelli** (Villanova University, USA), **Dr Maria Pacheco** and **Prof Ananias Escalante** (Temple University, USA), and **Dr Johann van As** (University of the Free State Qwaqwa Campus, South Africa), who served as co-investigators on this initiative. The collaboration aimed to secure additional funding and expand postgraduate

research and training opportunities. Through a Polish National Science Centre (NCN-)funded project with **Prof Gemma Palomar** and **Prof Rodrigo Megia Palma** (Complutense University of Madrid, Spain), **Dr Netherlands** investigated the role of blood parasites in amphibian disease dynamics, including their interactions with emerging pathogens. In a continuing regionally focused initiative, he collaborated with **Dr Francois Jacobs** (Namibian Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources), **Prof Louis du Preez** (North-West University), and **Prof Stephen Bullard** (Auburn University, USA) on an Oak Foundation-funded survey of blood parasite diversity in ectothermic vertebrates and birds within the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA-TFCA), generating data that will support the Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR) site designation and broader conservation goals. This is a continuing project, with sampling strongly influenced by seasonal and weather conditions. Three successful sampling efforts have already been completed, with the next scheduled for February 2026. The collaboration has generated more than five manuscripts to date, including the landmark discovery and description of *Pyxicephalus beytelli*, the largest frog described globally in more than 100 years. In addition, **Dr Netherlands** maintained long-term collaborations with **Dr Marvin Schäfer** and **Prof Mark-Oliver Rödel** (Natural History Museum, Berlin), contributing to joint studies on amphibian and reptile parasites and field-based experimental research.

Dr Michael Vickers connecting South Africa and the Czech Republic in research

Prof Charles Haddad continued collaborative research with **Prof Stano Pekar** (Masaryk University, Czech Republic) on dietary specialisation in various spider families, with an emphasis on Zodariidae and Salticidae. As a result of postdoctoral fellow **Dr Michael Vickers'** visit to the UFS from 15 to 25 March 2024, a collaboration was started on dietary specialisation in jumping spiders, too. This work has since continued, with Dr Vickers generating experimental dietary data on almost 150 individuals tested using four prey types. Prof Haddad also continued collaboration with **Prof Wanda Wesolowska** (University of Wroclaw) and **Prof Konrad Wisniewski** (Pomeranian University) on the taxonomy of African Salticidae; **Cristian Grismado** and **Martin Ramirez** (Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales) on *Anyphaenidae*, *Corinnidae*, and on *Trachelidae* with **Robin Lyle** (Agricultural Research Council).

Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa (DiMtec)

Maureen Kudzai Maisiri received a grant to participate in the Climate Adaptation Research Programme (CARP)

Maureen Kudzai Maisiri, a PhD candidate with UFS-DiMTEC, applied and was awarded a grant on 25 September 2024 to participate in the Climate Adaptation Research Programme (CARP). This programme focuses on implementing climate change solutions across Africa to improve livelihoods and eradicate hunger by 2030. It also aims to nurture a new generation of researchers in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Islands, who will study the impact of climate change on disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies and strategies.

Dr Tlou Raphela-Masuku participated in the third SADC Regional Workshop

Dr Tlou Raphela-Masuku was invited to participate in the last and third Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Workshop. The third live event of the learning process under the theme *Flood Management for Risk-Informed Urban Development* was held in Tlokweng District, Gaborone, from 10 to 14 June 2024. The SADC and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) organised the workshop, which resulted in a collaborative published paper in *Jamba* titled, 'Lessons learned from the Risk-Informed Urban Development (RIUD) initiatives in the SADC region'.

INCOMING AND OUTGOING INTERNATIONAL STAFF EXCHANGES

This category showcases activities relating to incoming international staff hosted; outgoing international staff exchange other than conference and workshop attendance

Centre for Environmental Management

Dr Bimo Nkhata delivered a keynote presentation at the Wildlife and Tourism Management Conference (WMTC24)

Dr Bimo Nkhata was invited to give a keynote presentation at the Wildlife Management and Tourism Conference (WMTC) titled, *Harmony in Wildlife Conservation and Tourism*, held at the University of Namibia from 21 to 22 October 2024.

Dr Bimo Nkhata worked with partners to develop a REDAA

Dr Bimo Nkhata also worked with partners from the University of Venda and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to develop a funding proposal for the Reversing Environmental Damage in Africa and Asia (REDAA) Programme, focusing on ecological restoration.

The Centre for Environmental Management hosted three postdoctoral fellows

The Centre for Environmental Management hosted three postdoctoral research fellows during 2024 – **Dr Gladys Belle** (Cameroon), **Dr Yolande Schoeman** (South Africa), and **Dr Nicolette Vermaak** (South Africa; till February 2024).

Department of Animal Science

Department hosted nine international students from across five continents

The Department of Animal Science had the privilege of hosting nine international postgraduate students and collaborating partners representing five continents. These included master's and doctoral candidates from Peru, Canada, the United Kingdom, Japan, Austria, the United States, Hungary, and the Netherlands.

Each student engaged in research at the University of the Free State (UFS) through multiple visits of varying duration, depending on the scope of their academic programme. Timelines ranged from six-month mini-thesis projects to more extended stays of up to two years for master's and PhD research. This diverse international presence reflects the department's growing role as a hub for global collaboration, postgraduate training, and knowledge exchange in wildlife conservation science on giraffes.

Department of Microbiology and Biochemistry

Prof Carlien Pohl appointed as honorary professor at the University of Kent, UK

Prof Carlien Pohl was appointed as an honorary professor at the University of Kent in the UK and received a C1 rating for the period 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2030. This prestigious honour recognises **Prof Pohl-Albertyn's** significant contributions to a research consortium led by **Prof Jennifer Hiscock** of the University of Kent, who is also an affiliated professor at the UFS. The consortium focuses on the

development of novel chemical compounds with various applications.

Department of Physics

Department hosted delegation from the United States Embassy

On 23 April 2024, a delegation from the US Embassy, including **Ambassador Reuben Brigety II** and the Consul General in Johannesburg, **Vincent Spera**, visited the Naval Hill Planetarium. The connection between the observatories and the United States dates back to the 1920s, since both observatories were established by universities in the US, namely Harvard University and the University of Michigan. Over the years, there has been regular contact between the UFS and many American organisations, including the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Prof Seitzer selected as emeritus professor of Astronomy, University of Michigan

Prof Seitzer was appointed as emeritus professor of Astronomy at the University of Michigan in September 2016; he is the international patron of the Friends of Boyden Observatory and the Naval Hill Planetarium. He has been involved in the observatories for more than twenty years, contributing counsel and expertise to several activities and projects. He is also an invaluable link to the observatories' US roots. He visits Bloemfontein regularly; in 2024, the visit took place from 26 to 29 April 2024. **Prof Seitzer's** itinerary included presenting a lecture to the public at the Planetarium on 27 April, titled 'When Good Satellites Go Bad'.

Astronomy experts' heritage visits

As part of the IAU General Assembly, the 'A team' of astronomy heritage visited various observatories, including the Boyden Observatory and Naval Hill Planetarium on 16 and 17 August 2024. These technical tours formed part of the 32nd International Astronomical Union General Assembly, which was held in Cape Town from 6 to 15 August 2024. The list of experts was as follows: **Dr Sara Schechner**, curator of Harvard University's Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments; **Dr Ken Launie**, former president of the Antique Telescope Society; and **Prof Gudrun Wolfschmidt**, International Astronomical Union (IAU) Chair of Commission C4WG Windows to the Universe: Classical and Modern Observatories.

Department of Plant Sciences

Prof Sandy-Lynn Steenhuisen hosted Prof Nora Mitchell and three students from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

On 4-7 January 2024, **Prof Sandy-Lynn Steenhuisen** hosted **Prof Nora Mitchell** and three of her students from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire for fieldwork on *Protea* species in the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal. **Prof Mitchell** and her students presented their research at the 49th annual South African Association of Botanists (SAAB) Conference in Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, from 7 to 11 January 2024.

Milestones by the Pecan Health Research Group led by Dr Gert Marais

The Pecan Health Research Group at the UFS is led by **Dr Gert Marais**, in collaboration with the pecan industry, in studying pecan diseases and their management since 2017. At the beginning of 2024, Prof Clive Bock of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) visited the UFS, attended the Plant Pathology conference held in Clarens from 22 to 24 January 2024, and travelled to the pecan scab-stricken areas in South Africa with representatives of the pecan industry (South African Pecan Nut Producers Association) and the University of the Free State.

Dr Lisa Rothmann formed part of the 53rd Congress of the Southern African Society of Plant Pathology (SASPP) organising committee

Dr Lisa Rothmann served as part of the organising committee for the 53rd Congress of the Southern African Society of Plant Pathology (SASPP) hosted by the University of the Free State in Clarens from 22 to 25 January 2024. As part of this role, she hosted keynote speaker **Prof Emerson Del Ponte** (Federal University of Viçosa, Brazil), who was sponsored by ZZ2 and presented the JE Vanderplank Memorial Address, 'Managing plant health emergencies through epidemiology: Brazilian cases with global relevance'.

Furthermore, **Dr Rothmann** attended the 13th International Epidemiology Workshop in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, in April (9-12), where she gave an oral presentation titled 'Sorghum disease surveillance to understand South African producer perceptions and inform disease management and industry needs.' Additionally, she was selected to co-chair the

Epidemiology Committee of the International Society for Plant Pathology.

Prof Sandy-Lynn Steenhuisen added to the value and productivity of the RangeX project

Prof Sandy-Lynn Steenhuisen continued with existing international collaborations as part of the RangeX team. The RangeX project is a collaborative reciprocal climate-change and transplant experiment consortium of international ecologists led by **Prof Ralph Clark** (Afromontane Research Unit) and Swiss-based **Prof Jake Alexander** (ETH Zurich), which includes collaborators from Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Chile, China, and Australia. She also continued her collaboration on untangling the *Protea* phylogeny with **Prof Nora Mitchell** (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, USA), **Prof Robert Raguso** (Cornell University, USA), and **Prof Elizabeth Arnold** (University of Arizona, USA).

Department of Zoology and Entomology

Prof Charles Haddad hosted the annual third-year Entomology excursion

The annual third-year Entomology excursion was conducted for the seventh year by **Prof Charles Haddad** and PhD student **Ruan Booysen** at Bankfontein in the western Free State from 21 to 24 March. The group was joined by **Prof Stano Pekar** of Masaryk University in Brno and PhD candidate **Jan Korba** from Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic, who conducted predation trials on various spider families. The students conducted a comparative study of arthropod diversity in three biotopes using three sampling methods, delivered a presentation, and submitted a written report on their results.

Prof Stano Pekar and Jan Korba (PhD student) visited the Arachnology group at the University of the Free State

Prof Stano Pekar and **Jan Korba** (PhD student) from the Czech Republic visited the Arachnology research group from 15 to 25 March 2024 as part of continued collaborative research on the predation biology and dietary evolution of various spider families on a global scale. The two visitors also delivered presentations to departmental staff and students on spider mimicry and the phylogeny of Mediterranean trapdoor spiders, respectively.

Dr Edward Netherlands and Bernie Jordaan attended the 10th World Congress of Herpetology (Malaysia)

Dr Edward Netherlands and **Bernie Jordaan** attended the 10th World Congress of Herpetology held in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, from 5 to 9 August 2024. He was further invited to be a speaker in a plenary held at the VI International Conference on Malaria and Other Blood Parasites of Wildlife and the III International Symposium of the Wildlife Diseases Research Network, held in Medellín, Colombia, from 26 to 29 November 2024. During his visit to Colombia, he also conducted a student workshop on blood parasite sampling in local amphibians and reptiles.

UFS hosted a postdoctoral fellow from Germany in its HERP Lab

From 7 March until 14 April 2024, **Dr Marvin Schäfer**, a postdoctoral fellow from the Natural History Museum in Berlin, Germany, visited the UFS Herpetology Exploration Research and Parasitology lab of Dr Edward Netherlands to collaborate on an experimental project on frog parasites.

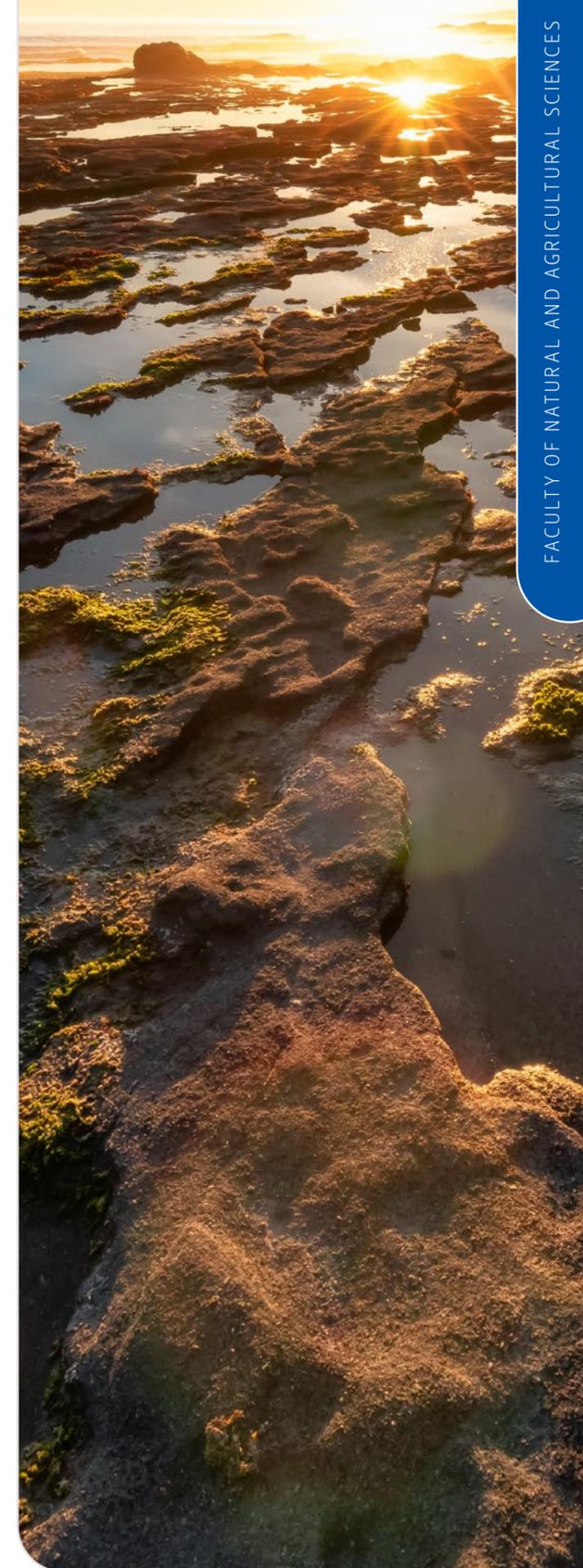
INTERNATIONALISATION OF LEARNING AND TEACHING, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

This category is concerned with new collaborative degrees, virtual exchanges, including COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning), student incoming and outgoing exchanges, and other significant developments relating to internationalisation of learning and teaching.

Centre for Environmental Management

The UFS' participation at the seventh International Workshop on Environment and Geoscience

Prof Shola Ololade was invited as a keynote speaker at the Seventh International Workshop on Environment and Geoscience (IWEG 2024), which was held from 22 to 23 November 2024. The annual international conference aims to be a fast and efficient platform for researchers and scholars worldwide to discuss recent developments in environment and geoscience regarding all aspects of interaction between humans and natural resources, ecosystems, special climates, or unique geographic zones, and the earth. The virtual meeting was co-organised by the League of Database Technology of Gansu Province, Lanzhou



City University, Gansu Mining Area Pollution Control and Ecological Rehabilitation Engineering Research Centre, Academy of Urban Development of Gansu Province, Academy of Eco Xi'an, Lanzhou Smart City Research Institute, Gansu Agricultural University, and the Wuhan Institute of Technology.

The UFS participated in the 39th Annual Meeting of the German Limnological Society

Dr Marinda Avenant was invited by the German Limnological Society to deliver a keynote address, titled 'Non-perennial rivers in Southern Africa: Unpredictable, highly variable and often misunderstood', at the 39th Annual Meeting (16 to 20 September 2024) in Dresden, Germany.

Department of Agricultural Economics

11th International Conference on Agriculture (AGRICO24)

Dr Primrose Madende represented the department at the 11th International Conference on Agriculture (AGRICO24) from 23 to 25 September in Bangkok, Thailand. She presented her research on empowering youth to actively participate in agricultural activities. **Dr Madende** described the conference as a "treasure trove of information and inspiration," featuring insightful discussions with industry experts, professionals, and researchers. Some of the most striking themes that emerged from the conference included climate change, food security, and resource management. The presentation on the power of collaboration to address key challenges facing agriculture was particularly inspiring. The ideas and collaborations that can emerge from such engagements will undoubtedly drive positive change in the agricultural industry.

Department of Animal Science

Department hosted Prof Miho Saito for her sabbatical research

The department had the privilege of hosting **Prof Miho Saito** from Kyoto University, Japan, during her sabbatical research in South Africa. Collaborating with **Prof Francois Deacon**, who served as her academic host, **Prof Saito** focused her work on giraffe conservation and educational awareness, exploring perspectives from both Southern and East Africa. Her sabbatical visit extended from February 2024 until mid-2025, marking an important period of international collaboration and knowledge exchange.

Department of Architecture

Department delegates Prof Bosman visited the Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

Prof Gerhard Bosman visited the Faculty of Architecture of Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, from 8 to 12 April 2024, where he lectured to second-year students in construction and first-year students in design within the International Programme in Design and Architecture (INDA).

Department of Chemistry

UFS hosted international scholars

The department hosted one intern and ten postdoctoral fellows from Nigeria, Morocco, Ghana, Iran, and South Africa, who were involved in the research. Dr Abdul Rashid Issahaku from Ghana was hosted by Prof Anke Wilhelm. He earned his PhD in Pharmaceutical Chemistry for his study on a *Computational Exploration of Molecular Determinants in the Inhibition of Selected Critical Oncogenic Targets in Cancer Therapy*. Dr Abdul Rashid Issahaku specialises in pharmaceutical chemistry, especially in using computer-aided drug design (CADD) to explore how molecules inhibit oncogenic proteins such as KRAS, BTK, and METTL3 in cancer therapy. The Conradie research group included Dr David I Ugwu (1 September 2022-29 February 2024, working on synthesis and properties of bidentate ligands and their metal complexes with catalytic application, perovskite solar cells, metal extraction from wastewater, medical and biological applications) and Dr Alhadji Malloum (postdoc) (2019265475) (16 August 2019-31 July 2024, working on ab initio and DFT calculations of the thermodynamic and chemical properties of solvents). Dr Matin Naghizadeh from Iran is hosted by **Prof Von Eschwege**, where he works on various wood projects, e.g. research and development on high-density wood construction materials and functionalised biochars for agricultural applications.

UFS participated in the European COST Action National Conference:

Prof Lyudmila Moskaleva served as co-leader of Working Group 3 of the European COST Action CA21101 'COSY' workshop. She presented lectures at the 2024 CHPC National Conference, which took place in Gqeberha, South Africa, from 1 to 4 December 2024, and at the COST Action CA21101 'COSY' workshop, which took place in Madrid, Spain on 9 December

2024. **Prof Lyudmila Moskaleva** further delivered a guest lecture within the Cluster of Excellence on 'Materials for Energy Conversion and Storage' at the Institute for Materials Chemistry, Vienna University of Technology, Vienna, Austria on 24 January 2024.

UFS member presented at the 13th International Conference on Porphyrins and Phthalocyanines

Prof Jeanet Conradie was invited to deliver an oral presentation titled, 'Wave distortion in Au(II) porphyrins' at the 13th International Conference on Porphyrins and Phthalocyanines (ICPP-13), which took place from 23 to 28 June 2024 in Niagara Falls and Buffalo, New York, USA.

UFS scholar delivered guest lecture at the fifth BiPoCo 2024 conference

Prof Julia Puseletso Mofokeng was invited to be part of the plenary discussion and chair a session at the fifth International Conference on Bio-based Polymers and Composites – BiPoCo 2024, held at Grand Hotel, Esztergom, from 1 to 5 September 2024 in Hungary. The title of her discussion was 'Morphology and thermal properties of PLA/PHBV/GO polymeric composites for possible application in water purification'.

The department achieved many milestones in 2024

Francois Jacobs was awarded the prestigious David Blow bursary to attend the DLS/CCP4 Data Collection and Structure Solution Workshop 2024, Oxford, UK, November 2024, hosted by Diamond Light Source. This bursary is awarded to only one or two outstanding students on the African continent who have made significant contributions to macromolecular crystallography, in order to receive advanced training in synchrotron development.

Department of Computer Science and Informatics

UFS travelled the continent to advance infection prevention through the use of virtual reality

Dr Benjamin Botha visited higher education institutions in Kenya, Tanzania (19-28 July 2024), and Botswana (3-5 October 2024), as part of the Digitalisation project to advance infection prevention and control using virtual reality. A needs analysis was done during the visits, and partnership-building events were organised where the institution could voice its needs and concerns. At the same time,

Dr Botha sought to foster collaboration and build partnerships for the project and other postgraduate initiatives.

Department of Geology

UFS representative delivered a keynote address at the IAEA Technical Meeting

Prof John Carranza delivered a keynote presentation titled, 'From Mapping of Mineral Prospectivity to Quantitative Estimation of Undiscovered Mineral Resources' at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Technical Meeting on Assessing and Quantifying Prognosticated and Speculative Uranium Resources, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 4-8 November 2024.

Prof Carranza has also delivered special topic lectures/presentations to academe or industry namely, 1) 'Introduction to Mineral Prospectivity Mapping' – lecture given at PDAC 2024 short course on *New Innovations in Mineral System Approach and Mineral Predictive Mapping Applied to Critical Raw Materials Exploration and Assessment*, Toronto, Canada, 1 March 2024; and 2) 'Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Mineral Exploration' – a lecture given at EuroGeoSurveys 56th GM Directors' Workshop, Rovaniemi, Finland, 20 March 2024.

Department of Microbiology and Biochemistry

UFS scholar awarded an NRF-related fellowship

Kelebogile Letebele received an NRF facility-related travel and training fellowship to visit the University of Szeged, Hungary, from 1 October to 1 December 2024. Her host laboratory was the laboratory of Prof Attila Gácsér in the Department of Biology, focusing on fungal pathogens such as *Candida albicans*, *Candida auris*, and *Candida parapsilosis*. There, she worked on developing methods for the analysis of fungal extracellular vesicle lipids using ultra-high performance liquid chromatography-high resolution mass spectrometry (UHPLC-HRMS).

UFS doctoral student received the Chan Zuckerberg sponsorship

Martin Visser, a PhD student in Biochemistry, participated in a month-long research visit to the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) in Berlin, Germany, in September 2024, as part of the German Research Foundation-funded AfRota-2 programme.



During his visit, he received training in rotavirus replication in cell culture and rotavirus reverse genetics.

UFS member invited to speak at the International Symposium on Cytochrome P450 Biodiversity and Biotechnology conference

Prof Dirk Opperman was an invited speaker at the 16th International Symposium on Cytochrome P450 Biodiversity and Biotechnology conference in Torino, Italy, (23–27 June 2024). Both **Profs Dirk Opperman** and **Martie Smit** presented talks on their research on structure-function relationships of cytochrome P450s. They also attended the 34th Conference of the Catalysis Society of South Africa (CATSA) in the Drakensberg from 3 to 6 November, where they delivered an oral presentation of their research.

UFS member elected as co-chair for a Biosurveillance and Veterinary Virology engagement

Prof Trudie O'Neill served as co-chair for the Biosurveillance and Veterinary Virology session at the Virology Africa Conference 2024, Stellenbosch, 15–18 April 2024. All the students received full sponsorship from the Poliomyelitis Research Foundation of South Africa. Prof O'Neill and five members of the Molecular Virology group also attended the ninth European Rotavirus Biology Meeting held in Valencia, Spain, from 2 to 4 October 2024. **Nikita Barron, Ralethoko Manamela, and Martin Visser** delivered oral presentations, with more students reporting their results as poster presentations.

Department of Physics

UFS MSc student presented at the International PLUTO symposium

During the international PLUTO symposium in Torino (Italy) from 23 to 25 September 2024, master's student **John-Paul Khumalo** delivered a presentation on his research simulations of accretion instabilities using the PLUTO code. The title of his presentation was 'Numerical modelling of white dwarf post-shock accretion columns using PLUTO code'. JP, Khumalo, IP van der Westhuizen, PJ Meintjes.

Department of Plant Sciences

UFS researcher nominated as semi-finalist in the NSTF Emerging Researcher Awards

Dr Mpho Mafa was nominated by the University of the Free State and is a semi-finalist in the NSTF Emerging Researcher Awards. He was part of the UFS delegates who hosted an esteemed team from Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN) on 26 April 2024, where his research in the Carbohydrates and Enzymology Laboratory (CHEM-LAB) and its role in plant health, and by extension, its impact on food security and repurposing of agro-waste was discussed.

Lectures delivered by Prof Willem Boshoff and Dr Angeline Jacoby

As part of their online seminars for MSc students registering for the Plant Breeding and Protection for Sustainable Production (BI1296) course in the

Department of Plant Protection Biology at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Alnarp, Sweden, **Dr Angeline Jacoby** and **Prof Willem Boshoff** presented lectures titled 'Nutritional improvement through biofortification' and 'Stem rust in wheat – the Southern African perspective', respectively.

UFS staff attended the American Phytopathological Society meeting

Dr Lisa-Ann Rothmann attended the American Phytopathological Society Meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, from 27 to 30 July 2024, where she delivered an oral presentation titled 'Syllabus redesign: A quest to conquer a 'wee beastie' in plant health education,' based on her Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Fellowship research. She also contributed to a poster presentation titled 'Plant rust research in South Africa: A picture is worth a thousand words.' In August, **Dr Rothmann** delivered a guest lecture at the Department of Plant Pathology of Kansas State University, with the presentation titled 'Epidemiology and field pathology as a bridge between plant pathologists, industry, and farmers.'

Dr Lintle Mohase represented the UFS as a panel member on the African Origins Platform

Dr Lintle Mohase was a panel member for the African Origins Platform (National Research Foundation, South Africa) applications' evaluation meeting on 12 September 2024. She was also a panel member in the United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) Future Leadership fellowship Round 8 Panel Sift and Interview Meetings (online: 26–27 February and 22–23 April 2024).

Department of Sustainable Food Systems and Development

UFS participated in the TAGDev2.0

The University of the Free State (UFS) is one of 12 African universities and the only one from South Africa to have been selected to implement the Transforming African Agricultural Universities to Meaningfully Contribute to Africa's Growth and Development (TAGDev) 2.0 programme. **Prof Jan Swanepoel**, Associate Professor in the Department of Sustainable Food Systems and Development, will serve as the UFS coordinator for the groundbreaking initiative aimed at transforming agricultural education across the African continent. The programme was officially launched on 12 August 2024 at the Second RUFORUM

Triennial Conference in Windhoek, Namibia, which comprised participants from across the continent, including vice-chancellors and principals, deans, university registrars, policy makers, researchers, scientists, and students. From the UFS, attendees included **Prof Johan van Niekerk, Prof Sam Adelabu, Prof Jan Swanepoel, Prof Corli Witthuhn, Prof Paul Oberholster, Dr Molapo Qhobela, and Lacea Loader.**

Department of Zoology and Entomology

Prof Daryl Codron attended a research workshop at the University of Colorado

Prof Daryl Codron attended a human palaeodiet research workshop at the University of Colorado at Boulder, USA, from 5 to 15 July 2024 and delivered a campus-wide guest lecture on the pitfalls of quantitative analysis of isotope data.

Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa (DiMTEC)

Dr Tlou Raphela-Masuku presented at the eighth International Symposium of Flash Floods in Wadi Systems

From 4 to 7 November 2024, **Dr Tlou Raphela-Masuku** presented a paper titled, 'The Impacts of Floods in South Africa' at the eighth International Symposium of Flash Floods in Wadi Systems, organised by the National Water and Energy Centre of the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) in partnership with the DPRI, Kyoto University.

The theme for the block course was, *Building Resilience in a Changing World: Innovative Approaches to Disaster Risk Reduction*. Participants from South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zambia attended the course.

Dithuso Monare broke boundaries with her abstract submission at the 25th International AIDS conference

Dithuso Monare, a dedicated social worker and recent Master of Disaster Management graduate, submitted her abstract to the 25th International AIDS Conference and was awarded a scholarship for conference attendance to the conference held in Munich, Germany, from 22 to 26 July 2024. Her paper, 'Challenges in Access to Identification Documentation and Protection Services for Unaccompanied Minors and Undocumented Children', was accepted for presentation under the track *Removing Legal, Policy,*

and Human Rights Barriers for Children and Young People. The paper highlighted the complex barriers that hinder vulnerable children in South Africa from obtaining vital identification documents and accessing protection services.

Institute for Groundwater Studies (IGS)

UFS researchers showcased excellence at the 2024 SADC Groundwater Conference

Researchers **Prof Modreck Gomo**, **Dr Eelco Lukas**, postdoctoral student **Dr Anton Lukas**, and MSc Geohydrology students (**Mmakoena Rammutla and Tlotliso Ellius Nape**) from IGS attended and presented at the SADC Groundwater Conference under the theme *Promoting Peace Across Borders through Conjunctive Water Management* from 13 to 15 November 2024, in Maseru, Lesotho. Their presentations were as follows:

- Gomo, M, Ngobe, T. 'On the Telluric Electric Frequency Selection Method for Geophysical Groundwater Exploration'.
- Lukas, A. 'The threat of mining to transboundary water resources.'
- Rammutla, M, Modreck, G. 'Investigating the influence of stratification on groundwater chemistry, faecal coliforms and stable isotopes in a typical Karoo Fractured Sandstone Aquifer'.

UFS participated in the 18th Biennial Conference and Exhibition of the Southern African Geophysical Association (SAGA)

From 2 to 4 October 2024, **Prof Francois Fourie** and PhD candidate **Kobus Haumann** attended the 18th Biennial Conference and Exhibition of the Southern African Geophysical Association (SAGA) in Windhoek, Namibia. On 3 October 2024, a paper was presented on the results of research focusing on the use of a geophysical technique (two-dimensional electrical resistivity tomography) to map groundwater-bearing zones in the subsurface.

REPORTING ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

This category encompasses any highlights of efforts made by the UFS to recruit international students, align faculty enrolment plans with recruitment efforts, and any additional support that may have been rendered to students who apply for courses whose curriculum is strictly governed by professional bodies.

Department of Agricultural Economics

Dr Primrose Madende has flown the Kopsie flag high at the Intercontinental Conference on Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Resilience

Dr Primrose Madende represented the Department of Agricultural Economics at the Intercontinental Conference on Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Resilience: A Management Perspective in Istanbul, Turkey, on 17 and 18 November 2024. The conference provided a dynamic platform to connect with experts, scholars, and industry leaders to deliberate on the profound implications of climate change on agriculture, foster discussions that go beyond identifying challenges, and focus on actionable strategies for building climate-resilient agricultural systems. **Dr Madende** shared her work on empowering youth for climate change adaptation and resilience, which was well received by attendees.

Department of Architecture

UFS Earth Unit conducted site visits in the Free State

The UFS Earth Unit conducted two tours to the Basotho Cultural Village near Phutaditjaba in June 2024. Twenty-nine students visited and participated in different parts of a service-learning assignment for three days. **Prof Gerhard Bosman**, the Head of the unit, along with **Hein Raubenheimer**, invited 15 students and two staff members from the Faculty of Architecture of Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, to participate in the three-day workshop with UFS students.

Department of Genetics

UFS shared and exchanged knowledge on all things genealogy

The department's international exposure grew through participation in courses and research projects from 18 to 22 November 2024, particularly with the University of Montana (USA) and the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI).

In addition to formal teaching and learning activities in which staff participated, **Dr Morne du Plessis** served as a trainer at the *BioDATA Advanced Course*, held at Kruger National Park, where he facilitated training in biological data analysis for 11 Norwegian and 14 South African students from multiple institutions.

International exposure was strengthened through participation in the University of Montana and SANBI ConGen course presented on 12 December 2024.

Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa (DiMTEC)

UFS collaborated with the University of Buea, Cameroon

Prof Johannes Belle from UFS-DiMTEC attended a workshop at the Disaster Management Unit of the University of Buea (UB), Cameroon, from 13 to 19 December 2024. During his visit, Prof Belle gave a lecture to master's students studying Disaster Risk Management at UB; together with the students, they discussed and analysed both the master's programme at UB and the postgraduate programmes offered by UFS-DiMTEC. During the discussion, the UB students acknowledged the comprehensive programmes offered by UFS-DiMTEC, its outstanding reach in Africa, and its maturity.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

This category entails newly signed memorandums of understanding/agreements (MoUs and MoAs) in conjunction with staff and student mobility agreements, opportunities, but not limited to joint degrees.

Centre for Environmental Management

UFS collaborated with the World Bank and African Development Bank

From September to December 2024, **Dr Bimo Nkhata** worked with the World Bank, African Development Bank, and Climate Investment Funds Programme to develop climate investment plans for countries in Southern Africa, with a focus on nature-based solutions for the Zambezi River Basin.

Department of Geology

Partnerships with the Minerals Education Trust Fund (METF)

The department has excellent relationships with industry, as illustrated by the Minerals Education Trust Fund (METF) subventions to all full-time academic staff members to date. The feedback that the department received from mining companies on the quality of our graduates is very encouraging. For many years, all our academic personnel have received a monthly stipend from the METF from 1 January to 31 December each year.

Department of Plant Sciences

UFS academic explored and established collaborations with many African institutions

In May 2024, **Dr Makoena Moloi** visited the University of Debrecen in Hungary through the Erasmus Teaching Mobility Programme. **Dr Makoena** also hosted **Prof Brigitta Tóth** to strengthen the academic collaboration. Furthermore, **Dr Makoena** visited the University of Nyíregyháza, where she gave a lecture with the title, 'Selenium's impact on enhancing drought tolerance in edamame'. During this visit, she established a collaboration with **Dr Csilla Tóth** from the University of Nyíregyháza –a specialist in stress physiology with a focus on ultrastructural analysis.

Department of Soil, Crop and Climate Sciences

Prof Linus Franke selected to act as principal coordinator of EU-funded Intra-Africa Mobility grant

Prof Linus Franke acts as the principal coordinator of a European Union-funded intra-Africa mobility grant named Capacity Building for Climate-Resilient Food Systems in Africa (CaReFoAfrica), set to run between 2024 and 2027. This project aimed to facilitate the academic mobility of staff and students between African universities. While the UFS is leading the consortium, other partners involved include Maseno University (Kenya), the University of Eldoret (Kenya), Makerere University (Uganda), the Evangelical University in Africa (DRC), the University of Abomey-Calavi (Benin), and Hochschule Weihenstephan-Triesdorf (Germany) as a technical partner. Two PhD students and one master's student were selected in this project for bursaries towards studies in the department in early 2025.

Furthermore, **Prof Linus Franke and Dr Stephan Steyn** attended the CaReFoAfrica Consortium meeting in Brussels, Belgium, from 19 to 22 March 2024. CaReFoAfrica is an EU-funded intra-Africa mobility and scholarship scheme involving six African universities (Makerere University, Maseno University, the University of Abomey-Calavi, the Evangelical University in Africa, the University of Eldoret, and the University of the Free State), coordinated by the UFS, with support from the Hochschule Weihenstephan-Triesdorf in Germany. A follow-up meeting was held on the Bloemfontein Campus from 16 to 19 July 2024, where consortium members discussed procedures and regulations, provided an overview of current research activities, and selected candidates for degree-seeking bursaries.

UFS strengthened partnerships with the Eduardo Mondlane University, Mozambique

Prof Tesfay Weldeslassie is a key partner in a collaboration between the University of the Free State (UFS) and Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) in Mozambique. This partnership, formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UEM's Centre of Excellence in Agri-Food Systems and Nutrition (CE-AFSN) and the UFS, focuses on advancing research and training in agri-food systems and nutrition. The collaboration includes joint research, publications, student exchanges, and shared supervision, with a project budget of USD 60 000.

Department of Sustainable Food Systems and Development

UFS fostered collaborations for sustainable agricultural development

The University of the Free State (UFS) is an active participant in a number of high-impact European Union (EU)-funded projects that aim to transform higher education, foster sustainable agricultural development, and stimulate innovation through global partnerships. These projects reflect the UFS' strategic commitment to advancing academic excellence, international collaboration, and community empowerment through research, education, and policy engagement.

Among these is the MASSTER project, funded by Erasmus+ under the Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) programme. MASSTER – Managing (South) Africa and Senegal Sustainability Targets through Economic diversification of Rural areas – is a three-year initiative that addresses the complex nexus between rural development and migration in sub-Saharan Africa. Recognising the agricultural sector's pivotal role in livelihoods and food security, the project supports higher education institutions (HEIs) and agricultural extension services in South Africa and Senegal to empower farmers and students with skills for income generation, innovation, and sustainability.

Department of Zoology and Entomology

Inauguration of Prof Le Roux

Prof Aliza le Roux was inaugurated on 11 April 2024 as the first woman to achieve full professor status on

the UFS Qwaqwa Campus. On 26 October 2024, she also became a member of the international Belmont Forum Advancing Leadership programme and the inaugural cohort of the Public Engagement Exchange (PEX) between South Africa and Germany.

UFS hosted researchers in the UFS Department of Zoology and Entomology

The Bloemfontein Honours Biodiversity Excursion, supervised by **Dr Edward Netherlands**, took place at Bankfontein in the western Free State from 10 to 15 March 2024. This was a joint excursion with the Herpetology module, focusing on species identification techniques and data analysis. In preparation for the trip, Drs Michael Bates and Cora Stobie from the Department of Animal and Plant Systematics at the National Museum in Bloemfontein (both serving as research fellows at the UFS), presented a one-day workshop for the students. In addition, Adriaan Jordaan and Christiaan Steenkamp, principal technicians of the Science Collections at the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), hosted a pre-excursion workshop on the Specify database. They later joined the excursion for several days and actively participated in the field programme. Dr Marvin Schäfer, a postdoctoral fellow from the Natural History Museum in Berlin, Germany, also joined the field excursion, delivering sessions on various aspects of field-based research and safety.

Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa (DiMTEC)

Prof Abiodun Ogundeji and Prof Johannes Belle shared knowledge with the University of Public Service, Hungary

Prof Abiodun Ogundeji and Prof Johannes Belle, both from UFS-DiMTEC, spent two weeks at the National University of Public Service (NUPS) in Budapest, Hungary, on the European Union-sponsored Erasmus North-South Staff Mobility from 29 April to 15 May 2024. During their mobility in Hungary, **Prof Belle and Prof Ogundeji** taught some courses to postgraduate students at NUPS. Both staff members visited the National Agriculture Show of the country and the University of Szeged, Hungary. Their stay enabled them to visit the Faculty of Water Science of NUPS, located about 200 km from Budapest, to explore other collaboration avenues.

UFS visit to the IDS-NUST Bulawayo

Prof Alice Ncube visited the Institute of Development Sciences at the National University of Science

and Technology in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, from 10 to 16 December 2024. She held a meeting with the incoming director of the institute and visited a UFS-DiMTEC PhD student who had completed data collection and was preparing to proceed with his research. The institute has a long-standing relationship with DiMTEC, as most of its staff are alumni of the centre. UFS-DiMTEC is in the process of signing a MoU with NUST, facilitated by the Office for International Affairs (OIA).

INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME

This category is concerned with activities that are aimed at the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments.

Centre for Environmental Management

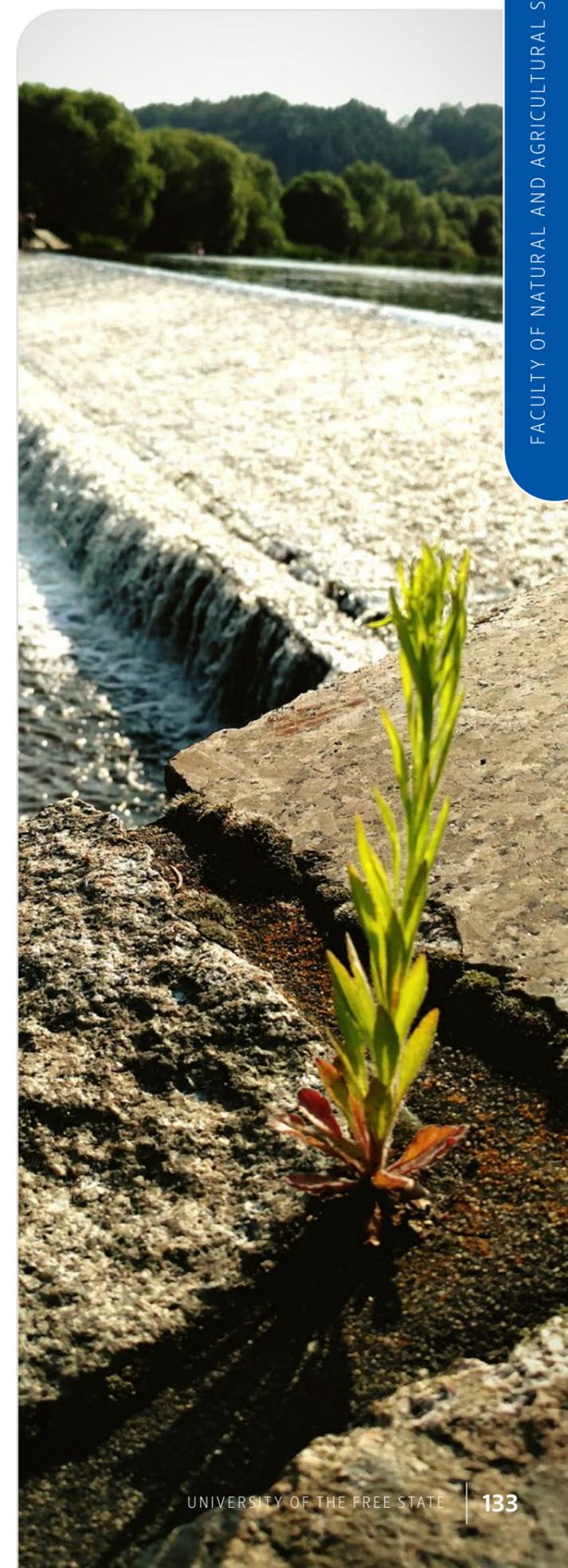
Dr Marinda Avenant continued spreading UFS excellence through her international collaborations

Drs Marinda Avenant and Tascha Vos participated in joint field sampling with colleagues from the Dresden University of Technology in the Vaalharts area (Northern Cape and North West provinces) from 19 to 25 July 2024. The German delegation comprised Drs Dirk Jungmann and Hilmar Börnick, along with Annika Schubert and Alex Becker. The collaboration focused on improving agricultural irrigation infrastructure with an emphasis on environmental sustainability. In partnership with the Centre for Environmental Management at the University of the Free State, the team developed an innovative in vitro algae test, combined with chemical analysis, to detect herbicide contamination. During the visit, Drs Jungmann and Börnick also delivered lectures to students enrolled in the Postgraduate Diploma in Integrated Water Management.

Department of Geography

UFS postgraduate students participated in the Afromontane Research Unit

On 11 September 2024, three of our postgraduate students, **Bongumusa Sibisi (Hons), Elizabeth Carr (Hons), and Colby Weiss (MSc)**, joined a group of French and South African researchers on an excursion to the Eastern Free State. They participated in a showcase at the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU) on our Qwaqwa Campus. The showcase offered invaluable insights





into the work being done on the Subantarctic islands, exploring their interconnectedness and importance in understanding the Southern Hemisphere's climate. The team also had the opportunity to hike around Golden Gate Highlands National Park and up the Witsieshoek chain ladder route to the Tugela Falls. The excursion was funded by the NRF-PROTEA France bilateral grant and organised by Dr Rudolph.

Department of Microbiology and Biochemistry

UFS students awarded for best presentations at the 16th International Congress on Yeasts

Two PhD students, **Corinne Fourie** and **Karabo Setsiba**, won Best Poster Presentation awards at the 16th International Congress on Yeasts, held in Cape Town from 29 September to 3 October 2024. **Corinne Fourie**, PhD in Biochemistry, received the best poster award in the category 'Fantastic Yeasts', sponsored by the Wiley journal *Yeast*, while **Karabo Setsiba**, PhD in Microbiology, received the *FEMS Yeast Research* poster prize.

Department of Physics

UFS celebration of the installation of Space Situational Awareness systems

In 2024, several significant milestones strengthened the international profile of the observatories and planetarium. Slingshot Aerospace, a US-based company specialising in space situational awareness (SSA), installed and commissioned two satellite and space debris monitoring systems, Varda and Horus, on 30 April 2024, with continuing site support provided as required. This was followed on 26 May 2024 by the installation of the MROSA (Masaryk-Remote-Observatory-South Africa) also known as the Milos Telescope, a collaborative project between the UFS and Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic, which will support a wide range of research initiatives. At Boyden Observatory, two new robotic telescopes were added: a research telescope managed by the Czech Republic and another managed by a US-based company for satellite observation. The observatories continue to attract visiting academics and high-profile international guests, highlighting their unique offerings. Similarly, the Naval Hill Planetarium, conceptualised as a multi-functional venue, has hosted numerous international visitors and cultural events, including music and theatre productions. Notable visits during the period

included **Prof Patrick Seitzer** from the University of Michigan and the International Astronomical Union (IAU) historians, underscoring the global relevance of these facilities.

Department of Plant Sciences

In 2024, Prof Louis Scott and Dr Andri van Aardt participated in international collaborations

Prof Louis Scott and **Dr Andri van Aardt** collaborated with Paloma de la Peña, University of Granada, Spain, on a project titled, *Marshall Rock Shelter (Eastern Cape)*. This collaboration was established in 2023. They also collaborated with **Piet-Louis Grundling** and **Althea Grundling** on the reconstruction of past environments at Colbyn wetland in Gauteng. This collaboration started in 2018.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

This section aims to highlight any internationalisation activities that may not have been catered for, or suitable for the previous categories.

Centre for Environmental Management

Dr Nkhata engaged in the ICSU 2024

Dr Bimo Nkhata actively engaged with the International Programme on Ecosystem Change and Society (PECS) established by the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). He participated in the annual management committee meeting of the INSAKA University Consortium (University of the Free State, University of Botswana, Clemson University, Copperbelt University, University of Montana, University of Namibia, and the Independent Institute of Education) held in Kasane, Namibia, in May 2024.

Dr Nico Avenant served on the IUCN Specialist group

Dr Nico Avenant has been requested to serve on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission Cat Specialist Group, where he is currently coordinating the international IUCN caracal Red List assessment (RLA), and has been involved with the black-footed cat and the aardwolf Red List assessments.

Dr Nico Avenant's work on the caracal

Dr Nico Avenant's work on the caracal, in collaboration

with Roberto Isotti and Alberto Cambone from the University of Rome, appeared on the *Camera Service Roma Eventi* YouTube channel on 22 January 2024.

Dr Nico Avenant's collaboration with USDA Wildlife Services

Dr Nico Avenant collaborated with scientists from USDA Wildlife Services to test the effectivity of locally produced anti-predator protection collars against damage-causing coyotes (previously placed in the same genus as our black-backed jackal), at a scale not possible in South Africa. The making of these collars was a product of collaboration between Dr Avenant and a Karoo sheep farmer. The testing of 400 of these collars was done at the US National Red Meat Research Centre in Clay Centre, Nebraska. Based on the positive results, a request was also received from a group of senior scientists in Australia who want to test the effect of the collars against damage-causing dingos. From work done in South Africa, we know that these collars are successful against caracal, and the news that it may also be an asset against canids is encouraging in the South African context.

Department of Agricultural Economics

UFS professor ranked among the top 2% of scientific researchers globally

Prof Yonas Bahta was ranked among the top 2% of scientific researchers globally by Stanford University and Elsevier in 2024.

UFS staff represented the UFS at the 24th International Farm Management Association Conference

Two colleagues presented their research at the 24th International Farm Management Association (IFMA) Conference held in Saskatoon, Canada, from 7 to 12 July 2024. **Prof Yonas Bahta** presented a paper titled, 'Water Resilience and Change of Water Use Behaviour', while **Brent Jammer** presented a paper titled, 'Economic Value of Sex-Sorted Semen in South Africa: A Beef Cattle Example.' The conference, themed *Resilience Through Innovation*, brought together experts and researchers from around the world to discuss and exchange ideas on enhancing agricultural practices through innovative solutions. We are thrilled to have our department represented on this prestigious international platform, contributing to the global conversation on agricultural resilience and innovation.

Staff members from the department participated in various international presentations:

Two lecturers from the Department of Agricultural Economics, **Prof Yonas Bahta** and **Dr WA Lombard**, represented the UFS at the 32nd International Conference of Agricultural Economists held in New Delhi, India, from 2 to 7 August 2024.

Prof Yonas Bahta presented his research titled, 'The Impact of COVID-19 on the Value Chain, Food Security, and Factors Affecting Food Insecurity in Namibia.'

Dr WA Lombard presented his research titled, 'Livestock Producers' Preferences for Oxytetracycline Antibiotics: An Eye-Tracking Approach in South Africa.'

Prof Henry Jordaan, accompanied by other UFS members, visited the Moi University in Kenya

The department's Academic Head, **Prof Henry Jordaan**, visited Moi University in Kenya, 21-24 September 2024, along with colleagues from the School of Nursing and the Department of Computer Science: **Prof Lizemari Hugo-Van Dyk**, an expert in nursing education, and **Dr Bennie Botha**, a specialist in human-computer interaction. During their visit, they forged valuable connections with faculty members from the Faculty of Agriculture as part of a continuing project focused on implementing extended reality technologies in an African context. Additionally, **Prof Hugo-Van Dyk** and **Dr Botha** have established collaboration opportunities with peers from the College of Health Sciences at Moi University. This innovative, multidisciplinary research initiative embodies the spirit of collaboration across fields.

While **Prof Jordaan** was the only member of the Department of Agricultural Economics present at Moi University (Kenya), **Dr WA Lombard** and PhD student, **Danie Naudé**, were also actively involved in this project. **Naudé** is currently developing a framework through his PhD research that will guide the application of extended reality in agricultural education, which has the potential to transform the learning experience in this vital sector.

Department of Animal Sciences

Members of the department presented at the EAAP 2024 conference

Prof Frikkie Neser and **Prof Errol Cason** of Animal Breeding attended and presented at the European Federation of Animal Science (EAAP) 2024 Conference held in Florence, Italy, from 1 to 5 September 2024.

The following contributions were presented at the conference:

Barnard, LD, Neser, FWC, Cason, ED, Hugo, A & O'Neill, HA. 2024. 'The effect of gender, days on feed and Zilpaterol hydrochloride treatment on the growth performance of feedlot cattle.' Poster presented at the 54th Annual SASAS Congress, East London, South Africa. 3-5 July 2024. Poster presentation.

Van Niekerk, M, Cason, ED, Neser, FWC, Van Wyk, JB, and Ducrocq, V. 'Genomic evaluation of SA Holsteins incorporating local and foreign genetic markers under two production systems.' The 75th EAAP Annual Meeting, Florence, Italy, 1-5 September 2024. Oral presentation.

Cason, ED, Van Wyk, JB, Vermeulen, PD, Van der Westhuizen, RR, Reding, JJ, Foster L, Neser, FWC and Du Preez, LL. 'A genome-wide association study to identify the genetic origin of dermatosparaxis in South African Drakensberger cattle.' The 75th EAAP Annual Meeting, Florence, Italy, 1-5 September 2024. Poster presentation.

Department of Architecture

UFS multi-award-winning architect from New Zealand delivered inaugural lecture

Multi-award-winning architect and Adjunct Professor at the UFS, **Prof Jeremy Smith**, presented his inaugural lecture on 27 August. The lecture, titled 'Being finished is finished,' provided a remarkable view into the highly innovative nature of his practice as design director at Irving Smith Architects in New Zealand. The event was truly inspiring for those who attended.

Prof Jeremy Smith received a prize for 'The most beautiful, innovative, and iconic building'

Adjunct Professor **Jeremy Smith** won the 'Most Beautiful, Innovative and Iconic Building' award at the Dubai International Best Practises Awards for Sustainable Development at the United Nations World Government Summit in Dubai, from 12 to 14 February 2024. This award recognises the global significance of innovating ways to sustainably engage with the wider environment through our renewable timber resources.

UFS supervisors co-supervised PhD candidates

International PhD examiners, **Dr Jo Russell-Clarke** (formerly at the University of Adelaide) and adjunct professor, **Prof Jeremy Smith**, visited the Department

of Architecture at the UFS from 16 to 18 January 2024 and from 26 to 29 August 2024, respectively, and participated in the related weeklong PhD symposia, which were well attended, and were streamed internationally.

Namibia University of Science and Technology hosted Dr Hendrik Auret as a visiting lecturer

Dr Hendrik Auret was invited as a visiting lecturer to the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Windhoek from 30 July to 10 August 2024 to share his alternative architectural site analysis methods with postgraduate students in the Department of Architecture and Spatial Planning at NUST. **Dr Auret** was also invited to present a research workshop on his alternative architectural site analysis methods to postgraduate students at the Belfast School of Architecture and the Built Environment (Ulster University) from 18 to 29 November 2024. This workshop was funded by the National Future Professors Programme.

UFS lecturer invited to teach and train on earth construction

Prof Gerhard Bosman was invited to teach and train on earth-construction principles at the Himalayan Institute of Alternatives Ladakh (HIAL), Phyang Village near Leh in India, from 18 to 30 July 2024. He presented sun-dried earth block (adobe) production and construction workshops to 42 students and 38 professionals as part of the Sun and Earth Festival.

Department of Computer Sciences and Informatics

UFS student and supervisor presented research at the 2024 ACDSA

A paper by one of our honours students, **Johannes du Toit**, co-authored by **Prof Eduan Kotzé**, was accepted for oral presentation at the 2024 International Conference on Artificial Intelligence, Computer, Data Sciences and Applications (ACDSA) at the University of Seychelles, held from 1 to 2 February 2024. The paper also appeared in the full conference proceedings. The paper was titled, 'The Automatic Detection of Abusive Language in Dota 2 Chat Messages'.

Prof Eduan Kotzé furthered collaborations with University of Antwerp

The Business Intelligence and Text Mining (BITM) research group, led by **Prof Eduan Kotzé**, continued working on natural language processing problems,

including general text classification, neural language models, conversational agents, and generative AI. Prof Kotzé visited the University of Antwerp from 1 to 8 February 2024 to further collaborate on research with Prof Walter Daelemans. Currently, Prof Kotzé's group is involved in two departmental projects. The first project utilises large language models to grade C# code, while the second focuses on detecting Generative AI (GenAI) in C# code.

Department of Engineering Sciences

Dr Jacques Maritz awarded prestigious EU research grant

Dr Jacques Maritz became part of a prestigious team that was awarded a £499 258 (approximately R11,5 million) research grant by the Science and Technology Facilities Council of the United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) organisation. This grant, approved in December 2024, will support a statistical physics-based analysis of South Africa's power grid.

UFS student participated in a winter school programme in Pskov, Russia

Muhammad Cassim, a second-year student in the Department of Engineering Sciences in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences at the University of the Free State, participated in the winter university project in Pskov, Russia, from 25 November to 9 December 2024. The winter school aimed to strengthen relationships among young engineers and deepen international interaction via skills improvement, joint projects, and social cohesion. The programme boasts a densely packed education block, project block, and cultural block.

Cassim was part of the UFS Grid-Related Research Group and actively participated in research centred on complexity science. He intends to complete his BSc Physics degree with Engineering subjects and progress towards postgraduate studies in the UFS Department of Physics.

Department of Genetics

UFS master's student presented research on white rhino genetics

Zuan Grobler presented his MSc research on white rhino genetics on 7 October 2024 at the annual symposium of the Southern African Wildlife Management Association held in Windhoek, Namibia,

from 6 to 11 October 2024. Beyond this, **Profs Paul Grobler and Brian Reilly**, along with four students from the Department of Genetics (and several other UFS staff members), also attended the conference.

Department of Geography

Dr Elizabeth Rudolph elected as the South African representative in the IGU and IAGJCGS

Dr Elizabeth Rudolph was elected in August 2024 as the South African representative to the International Geographical Union (IGU) and the International Association of Geomorphologists Joint Commission on Geomorphology and Society (IAGJCGS).

Department of Geology

Dr Martin Clark broadened the horizons of international collaboration

Dr Martin Clark participated in a field workshop organised by **Prof Dirk van Reenen** from the University of Johannesburg, South Africa, together with researchers from Japan, Russia, Switzerland, Norway, and Australia, from 22 to 26 July 2024. The main outcome of the field workshop was the scrutinisation of structural-geological and laboratory-based data that have been integrated as the basis to unravel the complex evolutionary history of the Limpopo Complex at 2.72–2.02 Ga. Regional and detailed field and structural geological mapping has been shown to be essential to support the development of geodynamic models that, integrated with laboratory-based data, could be used to unravel the complex thermo-tectonic evolution of the area.

To support the outcome, several internationally driven projects are now underway, based on the development of a Limpopo complex field guide that is sure to be a critical fieldwork support document going forward.

Department of Microbiology and Biochemistry

UFS scholars received research funding to collaborate with institutions in the UK

In January 2025, **Prof Pohl-Albertyn** and **Dr Chibuike Ibe** (postdoctoral research associate) received funding from the FAILSAFE (Fungal AMR Innovations for LMICS: Solutions and Access for Everyone) project amounting to R3,2 million. This fund was launched by the University of Exeter's MRC Centre for Medical

Mycology in partnership with the UK Department of Health and Social Care's Global AMR Innovation Fund (GAMRIF), aiming to find solutions to antifungal resistance.

Department of Plant Sciences

UFS student awarded scholarship

Lesego Malekana, a masters' student, was awarded a Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship for September 2024 to July 2028 to pursue his PhD under **Dr Jake Alexander** at the prestigious ETH Zurich, a leading science and technology institute in Switzerland.

UFS researchers visited Germany to further mountain research endeavours

Prof Sandy-Lynn Steenhuisen, **Dr Stephanie Payne** (postdoctoral fellow), and **Lesego Malekana** (master's student), along with **Prof Ralph Clark** (AfriMontane Research Unit, UFS Qwaqwa) and Dr Onalenna Gwate (Plant Sciences affiliate) travelled to Todtnauberg, Germany, to participate in the annual writing retreat of the internationally collaborative RangeX project from 10 to 15 November 2024.

Disaster Management Training and Education Centre for Africa (DiMTEC)

Prof Johanés Belle appointed as part of the organising team of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

Prof Johanés Belle was appointed by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) on 27 July 2024 to be part of the organising team for the Eighth Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GP2025) to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 2 to 6 June 2025. This is the highest-level dialogue platform on disaster issues in the world.

Prof Belle is also a member of the G20 Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction, which facilitated and produced the final Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) by the G20 heads of state in Brazil in November 2024.

Top UFS scientist received global ranking

Prof Abiodun Ogundeji was recognised as one of the world's top 2% of scientists for 2024, according to the recently released list by Stanford University. This list, created in collaboration with Elsevier and

utilising data from Scopus, highlights researchers who are making significant contributions in their fields and are considered world-class.

Dr Tlou Raphela-Masuku participated in the Potsdam Summer School 2024

Dr Tlou Raphela-Masuku participated in the Potsdam Summer School 2024, with the theme *Ecosystems Change and Resilience in the Anthropocene*. It was held from 15 September to 4 October 2024. The Summer School was organised in partnership with the city of Potsdam, the Alfred Wegener Institute, Helmholtz Centre for Polar and Marine Research (AWI), the Leibniz Institute for Agricultural Engineering and Bioeconomy (ATB), the Research Institute for Sustainability (RIFS), and the University of Potsdam in Germany.

Internationalisation activities in which Prof Alice Ncube participated in 2024:

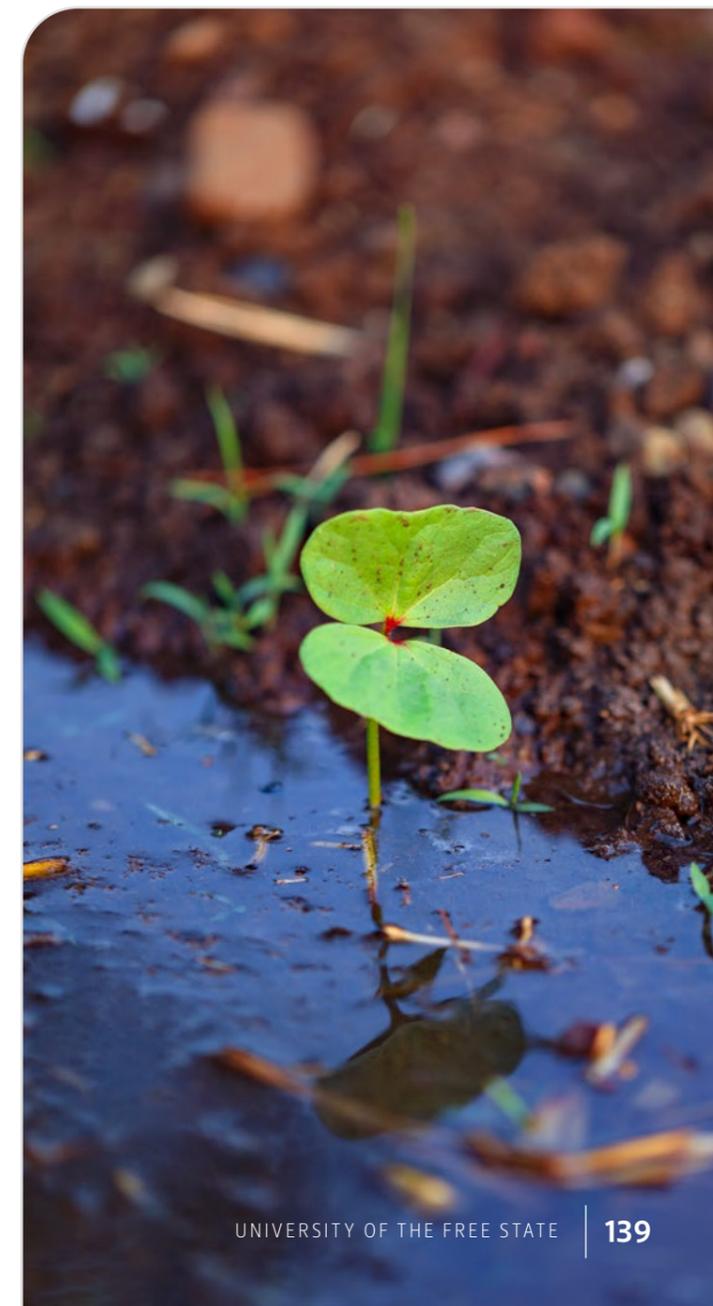
- **Prof Alice Ncube** attended the Africa Youth Advisory Board (AYAB) and African Science and Technology Advisory Group (Af-STAG) on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) meeting held in Mombasa, Kenya from 19 to 22 March 2024. These entities, instituted by the African Union Commission (AUC), serve to provide a continental strategy for mitigating disasters and promote meaningful engagement and involvement in DRR policy development, implementation, and review across Africa.
- **Prof Alice Ncube** and **Prof Johanés Belle** were part of the Africa Network of Centres of Excellence for DRR, Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems and Anticipatory Action in Kampala, Uganda, from 15 to 19 April 2024.
- **Prof Alice Ncube** and **Prof Jorg Szarszinsky** attended a stakeholder consultative meeting in Mozambique as part of the preparations for the Africa Network of Centres of Excellence for Disaster-Risk Reduction (NoE) Training Programme on Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems and Anticipatory Action held in Maputo, Mozambique, from 26 to 29 June 2024.
- **Prof Alice Ncube** attended the Forum of the Africa Network of Centres of Excellence for Disaster Risk Reduction (NoE) in Nairobi from 22 to 23 July 2024, under the banner of the NoE, funded by the Italian Government and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).

- **Prof Alice Ncube** attended the AUC validation workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 31 July to 2 August 2024. The workshop reviewed the draft report developed after data collection workshops with Regional Economic Communities and AU member states, consolidated the data, and validated the third Africa Biennial Report on Disaster Risk Reduction.

Institute for Groundwater Studies (IGS)

Institute hosts a webinar on World Environmental Day

The institute held a webinar on 5 June 2024, also known as World Environment Day, titled: *Managed Aquifer Recharge*, presented by **Kes Murray** (UFS-IGS alumnus), a senior hydrogeologist from Wallbridge Gilbert Aztec (WGA) in Australia. 🌱



FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION



Dean
Prof John Klaasen



Faculty Internationalisation
Coordinators



Prof Lodewyk Sutton and
Lethabo Machabaphala

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH, PUBLICATIONS AND COLLABORATIONS

This category encompasses all activities related to international research, including conference attendances, conference presentations, hosting of international guests for research and academic purposes, and international academic collaborations.

Department of Old and New Testament Studies

The Department of Old and New Testament Studies participated in the following international research publications and collaborations:

Prof Sutton participated in a library visit as part of a research project at the Wright Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, USA. The outcome of this visit was the peer review of three journals. This took place from 18 to 28 January 2024. Other UFS members in attendance included **Dr Nina Müller-Van Velden** and **Dr Anneli Machin** from the Department of Old and New Testament Studies.

Prof Lodewyk Sutton delivered the following papers and presentations at international conferences:

- Paper presentation titled: *A suffering body communicates the desecration of core beliefs. Reading Psalm 69 from a spatial bodily perspective*, at the European Association of Biblical Studies (EABS) Annual Conference 2024, Sofia University, Bulgaria, 15-18 July 2024.
- Presentation title: *Remembering 2 Maccabees for today: a spatially sensitive reading of the moral injury suffered*, delivered at the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (ISBL). Held at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 28 July-1 August 2024.

- *Book of Maccabees: a spatially sensitive reading of the moral injury suffered, creating a new lived experience*, delivered at: SBL Annual Meeting programme unit Space, Place, and Lived Experience in Antiquity. Held in San Diego, California, USA, from 23 to 26 November 2024.

Dr Nina Müller-Van Velden delivered the following paper presentations at international conferences:

- *Metaphorical birth language in the Gospel of John: revisiting the maternal body*, delivered at the European Association of Biblical Studies (EABS) Annual Conference 2024, Sofia University, Bulgaria, 15-18 July 2024.
- *Metaphorical birth language in the Gospel of John: revisiting the maternal body*, delivered at the New Testament Symposium, Evangelical Theological Faculty (ETF), Leuven, Belgium, 24 July 2024 (co-organiser).
- *Mary, mother of Jesus, in the Synoptic Gospels and beyond*, delivered at the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (ISBL). Held at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 28 July-1 August 2024.

Prof Francios Tolmie participated in the following international research activity:

Prof Francois Tolmie retired at the end of July 2024. His many years of service were acknowledged with the presentation of a Festschrift at the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) Annual Meeting held in San Diego, California, USA, on 23-26 November 2024. The Festschrift titled *Aspects of Soteriology in John and Paul* is published with the highly respected international publishing house, Mohr Siebeck.

Department of Practical and Missional Theology

Dr Martin Laubscher contributed to, published, and presented the following international research papers:

- *Belhar blues? On the confession's liturgical potential in re-imagining church and society*. This was a short paper presented at an international symposium in Stellenbosch with colleagues from the Netherlands (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Radboud Universiteit, Nijmegen) and South Africa (UFS and Stellenbosch), themed 'Re-imagining church and society'. This activity took place at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, on 5 March 2024.

- *Resonance in witness? A conversation between Hartmut Rosa and Karl Barth on preaching's relationship to the world.* This paper was presented at the 15th bi-annual international conference of Societas Homiletica, themed 'Preaching that Resonates', at the Protestant Theological University (PThU), Groningen, the Netherlands, from 7 to 11 June 2024.
- The paper titled *After Boesak? On preaching peace and the struggle for justice in South Africa today* was presented at the 15th bi-annual international conference of the International Reformed Theological Institute (IRTI), themed 'Peace among the nations: Reformed theology and geopolitical conflicts', which took place at the Duta Wacana Christian University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, from 27 to 30 June 2024.
- The keynote paper titled *On c/entering Allan Boesak's contribution on African Christian preaching and decolonisation?* was presented at the Second African Homiletics Society Conference, themed 'African Christian Preaching and Decolonisation' at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, which took place from 31 October to 4 November 2024.

Dr Daniel Andrew has co-authored the following:

- **Dr Daniel Andrew** contributed to a book project with international scholars on *Diakonia and Migration (Reverse Mission)*, Oslo, Norway.
- **Dr Daniel Andrew** contributed to a book project with international scholars on the Council of Nicaea 325-2025, Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Dr Daniel Andrew** attended quarterly meetings (virtual) with the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission. Paper presented at Bossey Institute, Geneva, Switzerland.

Department of Historical and Constructive Theology

Dr Calvin Ullrich's publications and international conference presentations:

- **Dr Calvin Ullrich** co-edited *The Unthinkable Body: Challenges of Embodiment in Religion, Politics, and Ethics* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2024). The co-editing of this publication was with **Dr Rebekka Klein** from Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany.
- **Dr Calvin Ullrich** published a book chapter co-edited by **Dr Rebecca Klein**, titled 'The eclipse of the body? Flesh and matter in French phenomenology' in *The Unthinkable Body: Challenges of Embodiment in Religion, Politics, and Ethics* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2024).

- **Dr Calvin Ullrich** delivered a paper presentation during an online international conference titled, 'Apatheism and the political theology of apatheia'. Sovereignty – God, the Nation, and the People: An International Colloquium. This conference took place from 18 to 19 October 2024. The conference was hosted by the Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná, Curitiba, Brazil.

Prof Henco van der Westhuizen was involved in the following international collaborations:

- In 2024, **Prof Henco van der Westhuizen** dedicated 30% of his professional time to international collaboration in his capacity as consultant to the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, in accordance with his contractual agreement. This role involved significant engagement with global theological networks, ecumenical processes, and international academic initiatives.
- From 1 to 8 February 2024, **Prof Van der Westhuizen** participated in the first in-person meeting of the Faith and Order Commission following the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Karlsruhe. The meeting, held in Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia, served as a key moment of theological reflection and strategic direction for the commission's continuing work.
- Later in the year, from 31 May to 1 June 2024, **Prof Henco van der Westhuizen** was invited to deliver a paper at the fourth international conference of the What Does Theology Do? (WDTD) research network, held at the University of Bonn, Germany. The conference explored the theme *Loci and Locations in Systematic Theology*, with Dr Van der Westhuizen contributing a paper that engaged contemporary questions in systematic theological method.
- From 3 to 4 June 2024, **Prof Henco van der Westhuizen** took part in a conference hosted at the Protestant Institute for Interdisciplinary Research (FEST) in Heidelberg, Germany, as part of a multi-year project on Inductive Theology, jointly led by the University of Zurich and Heidelberg University. Invited by Profs Lea Chilian and **Friederike von Oorschot**, **Prof Henco van der Westhuizen** contributed to the conference on the theme *Induction, Deduction, and Abduction as Heuristic Perspectives of Systematic Theologies*.
- Lastly, In November 2024, **Prof Henco van der Westhuizen** was invited by **Dr Andrej Jeftić**, Director of the Faith and Order Commission, to present a paper at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute near Geneva, Switzerland. The international

consultation formed part of the World Council of Churches' preparatory work for the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea (325). **Prof Van der Westhuizen's** paper, titled *Confession as a basis for unity*, explored the theological and ecumenical significance of doctrinal confession in relation to the pursuit of visible unity in the church.

Dr Eugene Fortein participated in various international research collaborations, including publications and paper presentations:

- **Dr Eugene Fortein** delivered a paper at the Church History Society of Southern Africa, hosted in Zimbabwe. The paper was published afterwards.
- **Dr Eugene Fortein** was invited by **Dr Arjan Knop** of KU Leuven in Belgium to be part of a five-year project on Truth and Radicalisation. The first conference was set to take place at the University of Pretoria in October 2025. A publication will follow.
- **Dr Eugene Fortein** participated in the editing of a book with Dr Jan Jorrit Hasselaar from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in the Netherlands. This activity also explored future collaborations between the two institutions.
- **Dr Eugene Fortein** was a member of the initiative for the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference in the USA, which focused on equality, justice, and diversity among the African diaspora.
- **Dr Eugene Fortein** was part of an interdisciplinary edited volume by the Transatlantic Roundtable on Religion and Race with De Gruyter, which is set to be published in 2025.

INCOMING AND OUTGOING INTERNATIONAL STAFF EXCHANGES

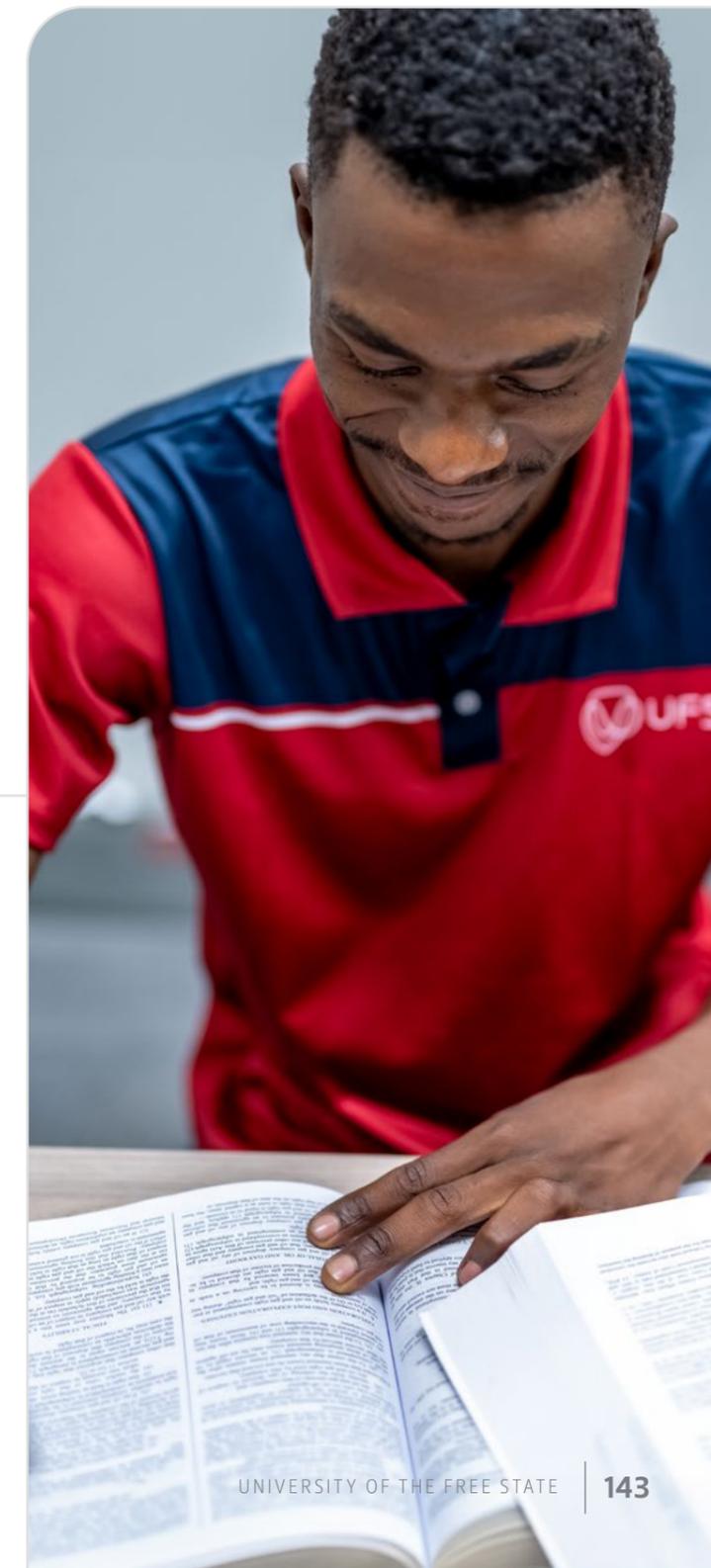
This category showcases activities relating to incoming international staff hosted; outgoing international staff exchange other than conference and workshop attendance.

Department of Old and New Testament Studies

Colleagues from the department participated in the following outgoing international staff exchange activity:

The Department of Old and New Testament Studies hosted an international conference from 4 to 6 June 2024. The engagement took place by means of an interdisciplinary perspective, bringing together

researchers from different fields to address complex and multifaceted problems. Among the internal stakeholders involved were **Dr Nina Müller-Van Velden** and **Dr Anneli MacHin**. This conference also hosted external stakeholders, namely **Prof Hans Ausloos** (Université Catholique de Louvain) and **Benedicte Lemmelijn** (KU Leuven, Belgium). This conference facilitated academic research activities with elements of innovative collaboration and interactions.



Department of Practical and Missional Theology

Faith and Order Commission conference

- The Faith and Order Commission undertook theological studies in Sulawesi, Indonesia, from 1 to 8 February 2024. The engagement brought together more than 60 representatives from all over the world to discuss issues that involve the public witness of churches, and finding ways in which to collaborate globally to make this world a just, peaceful, and sustainable place for all, especially the marginalised and most vulnerable members of society.
- The Faith and Order Commission met in person for the first time to elect office-bearers for the eight-year term ahead. **Dr Daniel Andrews** from the University of the Free State Faculty of Theology and Religion represented the Pentecostal World Fellowship. Furthermore, **Dr Andrews** was one of three African representatives at the conference who robustly engaged in conversations around decolonisation and how it impacts North-South relations and South-South partnerships.
- The Faith and Order Commission is planning a conference with the World Council of Churches in Egypt for 2025, where the Nicene Creed's existence and significance for the past 1700 years will be celebrated. Other notable delegates who were present include:
 - Prof Jerry Pillay, General Secretary, World Council of Churches
 - Prof Dr Stephanie Dietrich, Commission Moderator
 - Dr Andre Jeftic, Commission Director
 - Dr Michael Blaire, Commission Moderator: Commission on World Mission and Evangelism
 - Dr Peter Cruchley, CWME Director
 - Commissioners from more than 352 churches from every continent and more than 120 churches from traditional churches, including but not limited to, the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Reformed, Orthodox, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal, and Charismatic churches, represented a total of more than 580 million Christians.

Prof Joseph Pali took part in the following international outgoing staff exchange activity in 2024:

Prof Joseph Pali attended the International Society of Empirical Research in Theology (ISERT) Conference from 10 to 13 April 2024. Some of the

notable presentations were themed/titled, *Role of congregations in reforming power structures* (Prof Kobus Schoeman, Prof KJ Pali, Dr Marelize Maritz, Prof Cobus van Wyngaard, Dr Lourens Bosman, Dr Pieter van der Walt), and *Post-colonial reflection on the relationship between spiritual growth in township congregations and impact in the wider community of their own context*. The ISERT Conference is an event that brings together experts and professionals from the field of theology as well as from cultural studies, social sciences, psychology, and religious studies to discuss the relationships between an empirical approach to religion and the requirements of postcolonial theory. The conference is a valuable opportunity for networking, learning, and collaboration.

Prof Jan-Albert van den Berg participated in the following international outgoing staff exchange activity in 2024:

- A personal research visit to the Princeton Library, United States of America – November 2024.
- Attended the American Academy of Religion Conference in San Diego, United States of America – November 2024.

Prof Juanita Meyer participated in the following international outgoing staff exchange activity in 2024:

- She attended the Annual Meeting of the International Society for Pastoral Theology hosted in New Brunswick, NJ, USA, 29 May–9 June 2024.
- Prof Juanita Meyer undertook a research visit to the Princeton Library, United States of America – May 2024.

REPORTING ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

This category encompasses any highlights of efforts made by the UFS to recruit international students, align faculty enrolment plans with recruitment efforts, and any additional support that may have been rendered to students who apply for courses whose curriculum is strictly governed by professional bodies.

Department of Practical and Missional Theology

Prof Joseph Pali

Prof Joseph Pali delivered a PhD student from Justo Mwale University, Zambia (degree conferred in 2024) with publication: Moyo, M, & Pali, JK. (2025). 'Christian faith formation and spiritual insecurity in

Africa.' *Diligentia: Journal of Theology and Christian Education*, 7(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.19166/dil.v7i1.9012>.

Justo Mwale University students

Two PhD students from Justo Mwale University received degrees under the supervision of **Prof Joseph Pali**, **Prof Juanita Meyer**, and **Prof Venter**. Four additional doctorates are to be conferred in 2025.

Department of Religion Studies

Improving international student registration

The department is making significant strides in assisting international postgraduate students with their application and registration efforts. We have succeeded in ensuring that students from Namibia and Zambia register for the 2024 academic year. We discovered the nature of the typical challenges that international students are facing, which mainly relate to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) delays and internal bureaucracy, and the department continues to explore ways to effectively address these challenges.

FACULTY INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY

This section seeks to obtain information on the progress of the faculty in the implementation of its internationalisation strategy.

Department of Practical and Missional Theology

African international collaboration

The department seeks to achieve more international collaboration, particularly with African institutions. Some memoranda of understanding envisaged are with the VID Specialised University in Norway.

Department of Religion Studies

Advancing religion studies research

The Department of Religion Studies is in the process of strengthening its research foci in areas such as religion and gender, religion and climate adaptation, religion and health. These strategic research foci will facilitate collaboration with research partners across the continent and abroad. We are exploring these research areas in partnership with other religion and research partners across the country.

INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME

This category is concerned with activities that are aimed at the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments.

Department of Religion Studies

Research hub for African traditional religion

The Department of Religion Studies is in the process of strengthening its position as a research hub for African traditional religion, influencing students towards an Afrocentric approach to religion studies. We see this as a springboard towards a critical study of other religions as dialogue partners and alternative worldviews.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

This section aims to highlight any internationalisation activities that may not have been catered for, or suitable for the previous categories.

Department of Old and New Testament Studies

Members of the department currently occupy various leading roles in international academic societies:

- **Prof Lodewyk Sutton** is an advisory member for the International Society of Biblical Literature (ISBL) Steering Group: Place, Space, and Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean World.
- **Prof Francios Tolmie** serves on the boards of the Colloquium Ioanneum and the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas (SNTS).
- **Dr Nina Müller-Van Velden** serves on the steering committee of the Synoptic Gospels Programme Unit for the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), the steering committee of the Bible and Empire Programme Unit for SBL, and is a task team member for the Sesquicentennial Task Force for SBL. As a steering committee member, she is involved in the planning of these specific programme unit sessions at the annual international meeting of the SBL, the evaluation of abstracts for participation in these sessions, and chairing sessions at the international meetings. The Sesquicentennial Task Force is tasked with the future planning of the work of the SBL, with a particular focus on the upcoming 150th celebration of the SBL. 🌍

5

The University of the Free State adopts a vision of comprehensive internationalisation, with a specific focus on research and innovation.

Evidence of this vision is found throughout this report, specifically in the section on Institutional Narration. The university strives for excellence in all aspects of its internationalisation process, including support for international students and staff, as can be seen in the many examples of initiatives and activities coordinated by the Office for International Affairs (OIA), and as reflected in the comprehensive OIA report, that forms part of this document.

DATA ON INTERNATIONALISATION

The UFS strives for an Africa-imbued internationalisation process, which advances Africanisation and decolonisation. In 2024 this was reflected in the large number of international students from African countries, specifically from within the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The university integrates international and intercultural dimensions in all aspects of its core business and service functions. It specifically focuses on the international visibility, impact, and connectedness of research and innovation. Interdivisional cooperation is seminal to the success of internationalisation, and a particular focus is placed on advancing transdisciplinary international research.

This can be seen in the growing number of collaborating international institutions as well as co-authored papers produced in the period covered by this report.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS BY REGION

Registrations by residency

In 2024 the majority of registered international students (754) were from countries within the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Non-SADC countries (NSADC) accounted for 113 student registrations.

The rest of the international student contingent (29) were made up of students who reside in South Africa, but has a foreign classification (ZAF).

These numbers reflect a similar distribution trend to the three preceding years.

Residency > Nationality > Home Language	2024
	Registrations
NSADC	113
SADC	754
ZAF	29
TOTAL	893

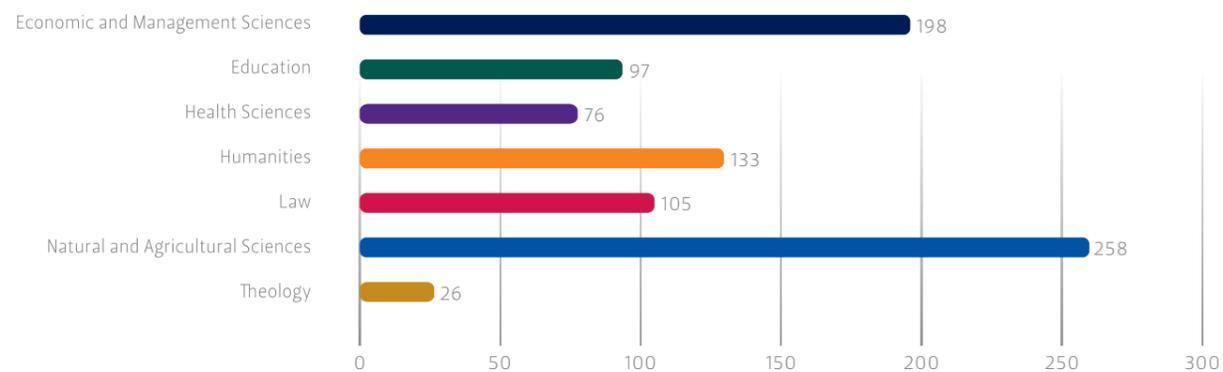
GRAPH 1: Registrations by residency (2024).

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT REGISTRATIONS PER FACULTY

Registrations by faculty

As in the preceding three years, the largest number of international students (258) was registered in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, with the second largest number (198) in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, and The Humanities (133) making up third place. This corresponds with the size of the relevant faculties, as these are three of the UFS's largest faculties comprised of a variety of different departments, representing a large number of study specialisations.

The smallest number of international students (26) were registered with the Faculty of Theology and Religion, one of the UFS' smallest faculties. These proportions correspond with distribution trends recorded over the 3 preceding years.



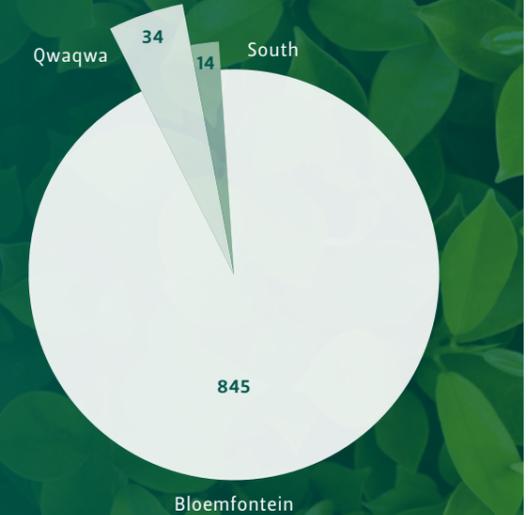
GRAPH 2: International student registrations per faculty (2024).

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT REGISTRATIONS BY CAMPUS

International students per campus

Of the 893 registered international students in 2024, 845 students were based on the Bloemfontein Campus, 34 on the Qwaqwa Campus and 14 on the South Campus.

This geographic spread corresponds with the sizes of the three UFS campuses. The Bloemfontein Campus is the largest, hosting all seven faculties and the UFS Business School, while the other two campuses have smaller overall student numbers, as well as smaller faculty representation, with selected, specialised academic offerings. The campus distribution mirrors trends from the three previous years.

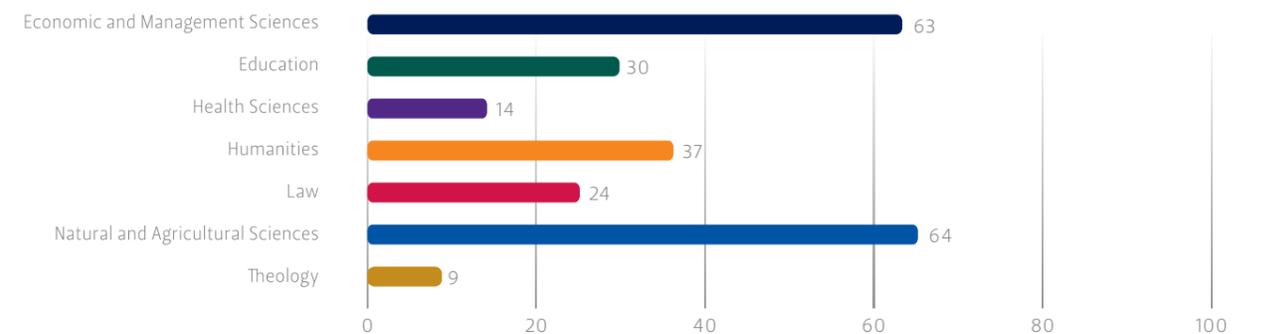


GRAPH 3: International students per UFS campus (2024).

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES PER FACULTY

Graduates overview per faculty

In 2024, the largest number of international graduates were from the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (64), with a slightly lower number recorded by Economic and Management Sciences (63), and the third largest from the Faculty of The Humanities (37). This corresponds with trends recorded in the three preceding years.



GRAPH 4: International graduates per faculty (2024).

INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES PER LEVEL OF STUDY

Graduates per level of study

In 2024 there were an almost similar number of graduates on a doctoral (56), Masters (59) and Undergraduate (58) level. This deviates slightly from the previous year, where the undergraduate category was markedly higher than the rest.



GRAPH 5: International graduates per qualification level (2024).

INTERNATIONAL POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS

The UFS recorded another significant increase in the number of postgraduate scholars in 2024, more than doubling the number of scholars registered in 2023 (135).

The 2023 postdoc registration already showed a considerable increase from the numbers recorded in 2022 – reflecting the growing popularity of the UFS as a postdoctoral research destination for international scholars.

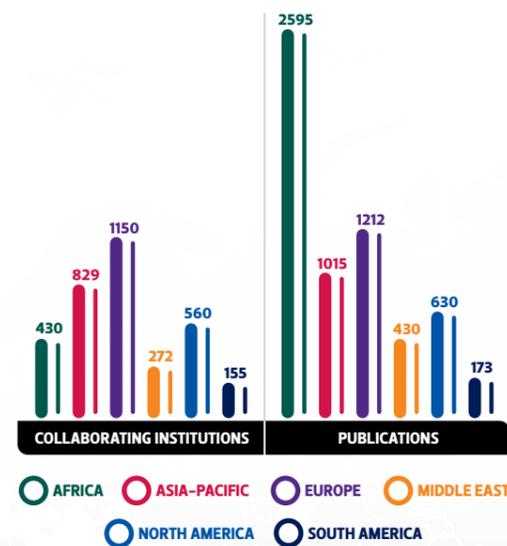


Postdoctoral fellows per registration
292
Doctoral

GRAPH 6: International postdoctoral fellows per registration (2024).



GRAPH 7: Joint research/Co-authored Publication (2022-2024)



GRAPH 8: Joint research/Co-authored Publication by Region

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS DATA

Between 2022 and 2024, overall, the university produced 5,911 scholarly outputs with 2,548 authors, and a strong 59.6% open access share. Impact is above world average, with an overall Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) of 1.29, supported by 51,259 citations and 8.7 citations per publication. This indicates that UFS publications are being cited more than expected for similar outputs globally.

Collaboration patterns show that international collaboration drives the strongest impact. Internationally co-authored work accounts for over fifty percent and delivers a high FWCI of 1.78 with 13.0 citations per publication. This points to a strategic conclusion: UFS gains the greatest visibility and citation advantage when research is connected to global networks.

Quality signals are also strong. UFS produced 600 publications in the top 10% most cited worldwide (10.2%), and 929 publications in the top 10% journals by CiteScore percentile (18.0%). Together, these indicators show that a meaningful share of UFS work is reaching both highly visible journals and strong global citation positions.

PARTNERSHIPS AND AGREEMENTS (2024)

In 2024, the UFS deepened its engagement with a focused portfolio of strategic partners. This allows for more meaningful collaboration while maintaining a broad base of academic-led grassroots projects. UFS values the organic activity that happens between researchers, students, and practitioners. This includes joint publications, staff exchanges, and shared lab spaces – activities that often precede or exceed the specific clauses of a legal document.

The UFS has refined its partnership model to balance a targeted portfolio of strategic alliances with a vibrant ecosystem of academic-led collaborations. Our approach moves “beyond the MoU,” valuing the organic activity – such as staff exchanges and shared infrastructure – that frequently precedes formal codification. We define success through reciprocal impact, fostering flexible knowledge-sharing networks that prioritise societal benefit in Africa over institutional optics.

ACTIVE MOUS/MOAS: 65

MoUs/MoAs by region: Africa: 23 Asia-Pacific: 5 Europe: 33 North America: 2 South America: 2

ERASMUS PARTNERS

Active EU-funded Projects: 10 International Credit Mobility (ICM)/KA171 Partners: 13

Cross-Border Collaborative Qualifications

The UFS has strategically prioritised its cross-border collaborative degrees as part of its Vision 130 strategy, emphasising the development of globally competitive graduates through international exposure. By 2024, at least four students – including pioneers Frans Benecke, Su-Mari Dreyer, Michael Skosana, and Dawie Bekker – were active participants in the university’s flagship Consecutive Master’s Degree Programme.

This pioneering initiative, a collaboration between the UFS Department of Economics and Finance and the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences (FH Salzburg) in Austria, offers a unique academic pathway. The programme is typically completed over two years, where successful candidates earn two distinct qualifications: a Master of Commerce (MCom) with a specialisation in Finance from the UFS and a Master of Arts (MA) in Business with a specialisation in Financial Risk Management from FH Salzburg.

Joint degree partner universities: 12 Partner Universities

Consecutive degrees student: 4 students with Salzburg University of Applied Sciences (FHS)

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